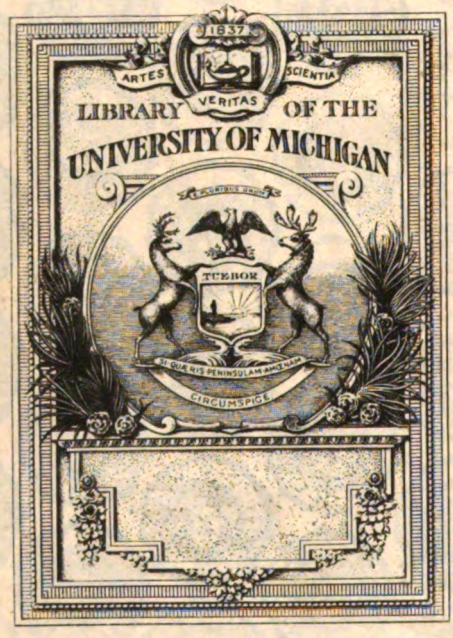
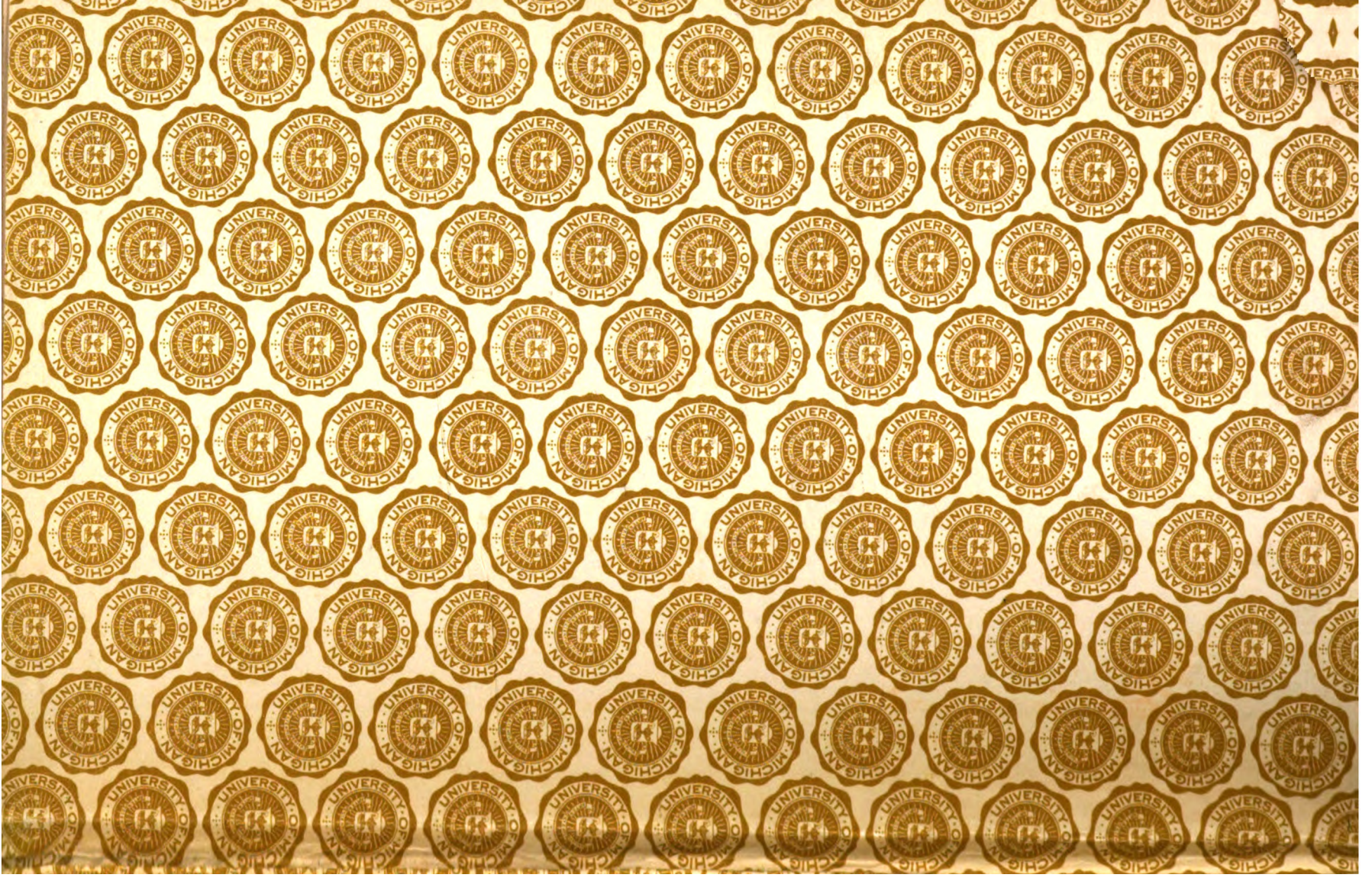
B 1,468,541


1837
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE


UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

AP
4
.S89

THE

STRAND MAGAZINE

An Illustrated Monthly

Vol. LXVIII

JULY TO DECEMBER

London:

GEORGE NEWNES, LTD., 8—11, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, AND EXETER STREET, STRAND

1924

INDEX.

PAGE

ACROSTICS 108, 210, 232, 421, 510, 636

AWKWARD SITUATION, AN .. .. *Martin Swayne.* 83
Illustrations by Howard K. Elcock.

BALFOUR, BETTY .. .. *Fenn Sherie.* 160
A PERSONAL "CLOSE-UP" OF BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE FILM STAR.
Illustrations from Photographs.

BRETHREN, THE .. .. *Ian Hay.* 280
Illustrations by S. Abbey.

BUNCH OF VIOLETS, THE .. .. *Ernest Bramah.* 3
Illustrations by J. Dewar Mills.

CAPRICORN .. .. *Lynn Doyle.* 158
Illustrations by Alfred Leete.

CHEQUE, THE .. .. *J. J. Bell.* 395
Illustrations by S. H. Vedder.

CHILDREN ARE FUNNY THINGS— 592
ACCORDING TO CHLOE PRESTON, THE POPULAR CARICATURIST.

CRIMINAL AS AN INVENTOR, THE .. .. *Edward H. Smith.* 260
Illustrations from Drawings and Photographs.

CUSTODY OF THE PUMPKIN, THE .. .. *P. G. Wodehouse.* 613
Illustrations by Reginald Cleaver.

DARK CORRIDOR, THE .. .. *Stacy Aumonier.* 54
Illustrations by W. R. S. Stott.

DEVANT'S PROBLEM STORY, DAVID 211, 394
"THE TERRIBLE AUNT," AND SOLUTION.

DISSEMBLERS, THE .. .. *H. A. Vachell.* 533
Illustrations by C. E. Brock, R.I.

DUEL, THE .. .. *L. J. Beeston.* 334
Illustrations by F. E. Hiley.

"ECONOMY SHOP, THE" .. .. *Ernest Goodwin.* 66
Illustrations by Charles Crombie.

FAIR EXCHANGE .. .. *Katherine Newlin Burt.* 625
Illustrations by E. F. Sherie.

"HOUSE TO LET" .. .. *Arnold Bennett.* 458
Illustrations by Charles Crombie.

JADE SPIRIT-GONG, THE .. .. *Edgar Jepson.* 425
Illustrations by J. Dewar Mills.

JANE GETS OFF THE FAIRWAY .. .. *P. G. Wodehouse.* 438
Illustrations by A. Wallis Mills.

KILLING OF PETER WRAY, THE .. .. *Edwin Pugh.* 384
Illustrations by P. B. Hickling.

KING OF HEARTS, THE .. .. "*Sapper*" (*H. C. McNeile*). 111
Illustrations by J. Dewar Mills.

LIFE'S GREATEST SATISFACTIONS? WHAT ARE .. .. *Arnold Bennett.* 664
Illustrations by A. K. Macdonald.

LOVE-PICTURES, THE GREATEST 585
THE OPINIONS OF WELL-KNOWN ARTISTS AND NOVELISTS.
Illustrations from Paintings.

PAGE

MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES . . . . . *Sir Conan Doyle* 16
Illustrations from Drawings and Photographs.

MEMOIRS OF SIR SAMUEL, THE . . . . . *Bellenden* 190
Illustrations by H. M. Brock.

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY . . . . . *W. B. Maxwell* 509
Illustrations by W. Hatherell, R.I.

MODELS: HOW THEY ARE MADE AND HOW THEY ARE USED 592
Illustrations from Photographs.

MR. BARCHESTER AND THE GODS . . . . . *A. H. Bosworth* 70
Illustrations by Treyer Evans.

MY COUSIN . . . . . *Dora Mackay* 41
Illustrations by Norah Schlegel.

NELSON, FOR NELSON . . . . . *Bygone Days* 113
Illustrations by C. E. Brock, R.I.

NEWS . . . . . *Short Anecdotes* 1
Illustrations by Reginald Cleaver.

NOVELISTS WRITE THEIR BOOKS, HOW OUR 341, 431 513
A Symposium of Eminent Novelists.
Illustrations from Photographs and Facsimile.

OAKLEY'S CASE, AN . . . . . *Major Stewart* 305
Illustrations by Warwick Reynolds.

OLYMPIC GAMES, THE . . . . . *L. A. M. Webster* 1
A Comparison Between British and Foreign Competitions.
Illustrations from Photographs.

ON SUNDAY MORNING . . . . . *Short Humorous* 544
Illustrations by Reginald Cleaver.

PARTY OF MR. JUSTICE AYLESBEARE, THE . . . . . *H. Pitt Phelps* 488
Illustrations by Howard K. Elcock.

PASSING PRIZE, THE . . . . . *Tom Gallon* 25
Illustrations by Frank Gillett, R.I.

PAVLOWA: THE DANCER WHO THINKS . . . . . *Sidney Dark* 200
Illustrations from Photographs.

PEARL OF TAHEU, THE . . . . . *H. de Vere Stacpoole* 548
Illustrations by W. Smithson Broadhead.

PEMBERTON BOY, THE . . . . . *Albert Dorrington* 120
Illustrations by F. G. Oakdale.

PERILOUS FIFTIES . . . . . *Henry F. Imbusch* 9, 214, 309, 422 560
Illustrations from Diagrams.

PETER INTERVENES . . . . . *Edgar Jepson* 54
Illustrations by C. E. Brock, R.I.

PICTURES: THE GREATEST LOVE 585
The Opinions of Well-Known Artists and Novelists.
Illustrations from Paintings.

PIG, THE . . . . . *E. J. Pocock* 34
Illustrations by A. Gilbert, R.O.I.

PRINCE AT PADDINGTON, A . . . . . *J. J. Bell* 185
Illustrations by Norah Schlegel.

PORTRAITS IN PENCIL AND PEN . . . . . *Walter Emanuel*
Arnold Bennett 80
G. K. Chesterton 97
George Bernard Shaw 73
Illustrations from Drawings from Life made at Stockholm, 1912, by Walter Emanuel.

PRIMROSES . . . . . *E. V. Seguin* 153
Illustrations by A. S. M. Hutchinson, M.A., and Michael.

PUNCH'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, THE . . . . . *Harry Graham and H. C. McNeile* 502
Illustrations by F. G. Oakdale.

QUEEN KNOWS WHAT TO WANT, THE . . . . . *Queen Alexandra* 1
Illustrations from Photographs.

QUEEN'S MAJORS, THE . . . . . *Hesketh Prichard* 257
Illustrations by F. G. Oakdale.

		PAGE
QUAYNE, THE ADVENTURES OF QUENTIN	*F. Britten Austin.*	
MYSTERY OF THE DUKE OF BERRISFORD, THE		217
FOURTH DEGREE, THE		351
ADVENTURE OF THE ONE-EYED MOOR, THE		467
PARIS FROCK, A		565
Illustrations by S. Seymour Lucas.		
QUICK WORK BY PHILIP	*R. L. Lurie.*	184
Illustrations by P. B. Hickling.		
RACE-HORSE, THE MIND OF THE	*Edgar Wallace.*	140
DO HORSES THINK?		
Illustrations from Photographs.		
REMINISCENCES AND INTERVIEWS:—		
BALFOUR, BETTY		160
BENNETT, ARNOLD		80
CHESTERTON, G. K.		77
CHURCHILL, WINSTON		604
PAVLOVA, ANNA		400
SHAW, GEORGE BERNARD		73
ROBBER'S ROUND	*Harold Steevens.*	98
Illustrations by F. E. Hiley.		
RUMMY AFFAIR OF OLD BIFFY, THE	*P. G. Wodehouse.*	321
Illustrations by A. Wallis Mills.		
SECTS IN THE WORLD, THE STRANGEST	*Shaw Desmond.*	482
Illustrations from Drawings and Photographs.		
SENSE OF THE FUTURE, A	*Martin Swayne.*	174
Illustrations by Frank Gillett, R.I.		
SQUARE DIAMOND, THE	*W. L. George.*	120
Illustrations by John Campbell.		
STATUES, STORIES OF	*Reginald Pound.*	366
QUEER THINGS ABOUT THEM.		
Illustrations from Photographs.		
TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS	*Albert Kinross.*	233
Illustrations by Stanley Davis.		
TENNIS, THE HUMOURS OF		93
Illustrations from Drawings.		
TERRIBLE AUNT, THE	*David Devant.*	211, 394
Illustrations by A. Bailey.		
TRUST MONEY	*W. W. Jacobs.*	578
Illustrations by Will Owen.		
TUBE MYSTERY, THE	*R. F. Foster.*	520
Illustrations by Conrad Leigh.		
"UNCLASSIFIED"	*Norman Venner.*	637
Illustrations by Lawson Wood.		
UPON THE RECORD MADE	*Edwin Balmer.*	413
Illustrations by Conrad Leigh.		
WATER	*John Galsworthy.*	371
Illustrations by Howard K. Elcock.		
WEMBLEY, THE HUMOURS OF	*Fenn Sherie.*	293
Illustrations from Drawings.		
WIRELESS, THE HUMOURS OF		192
Illustrations from Drawings.		
"WONDERFUL CHEAP SHOP, THE"	*Reginald Berkeley, M.P.*	496
Illustrations by S. Abbey.		
YOUNG, WHEN I WAS	*Winston Churchill.*	604
Illustrations by H. M. Brock and from Photographs.		

Printed by NEWNES & PEARSON PRINTING CO., LTD., Exmoor Street, Ladbroke Grove, W.10, for MESSRS. GEORGE NEWNES, LTD., 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

TACY
MONIER

A. CONAN
DOYLE

EDGAR
JEPSON

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

A REMARKABLE STORY OF
MAX CARRADOS –
THE BLIND DETECTIVE

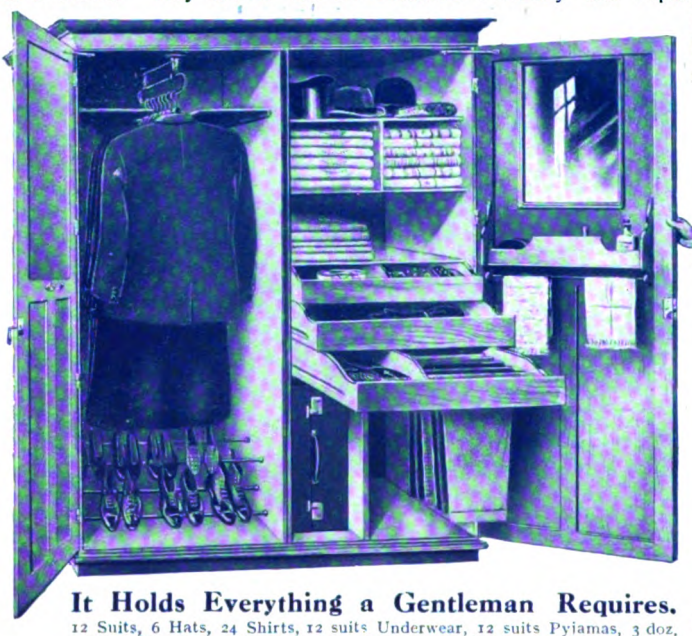
The AWLYN

ALL IN PLACE, VIEW & REACH

Keeps Your Outfit Fit.

A Place for Everything Everything in its Place.

This wardrobe is a splendid example of the cabinet-maker's art. The drawers and hangers slide at a touch. Any article can be obtained instantly and replaced in a moment.



What Shall I Wear To-day?

It Holds Everything a Gentleman Requires.

12 Suits, 6 Hats, 24 Shirts, 12 suits Underwear, 12 suits Pyjamas, 3 doz. each Collars, Handkerchiefs and Socks, 8 pairs Boots, Suitcase, etc.

THE AWLYN GENT.'S WARDROBE.
Perfectly constructed in OAK. Light, Dark, Fumed, or Antique Finish. Height, 6ft. 5ins.; width, 4ft. 6ins.; depth, 1ft. 10ins. - - - **22 gns.**

Also supplied in Rich Mahogany, **26 gns.**

THE AWLYN JUNIOR (a smaller size).
Height, 6ft.; width, 3ft. 6ins.; depth, 1ft. 8ins. In OAK. Light, Dark, Fumed, or Antique - - - - - **16 gns.**

Or in Mahogany, **19 gns**

SENT CARRIAGE PAID HOME. WRITE TO DESK "S" FOR PARTICULARS.

The "MARSTON" BUREAU

£5.12.6
CARRIAGE PAID HOME.

A perfect reproduction from a choice example of the wonderful craftsmanship of the Jacobean period. 2ft. 6ins. wide, made from fine-grain solid Oak. Fall Front, with automatic slides, full fitted desk, two long drawers below, antique fittings.

Write Desk "S" for Catalogue.

DOWNINGS
THE CASH HOUSE

61, 62, 49, 50, 51, & 36, LONDON RD., ELEPHANT & CASTLE, LONDON, S.E.1
(Facing Bakerloo Tube Station.)

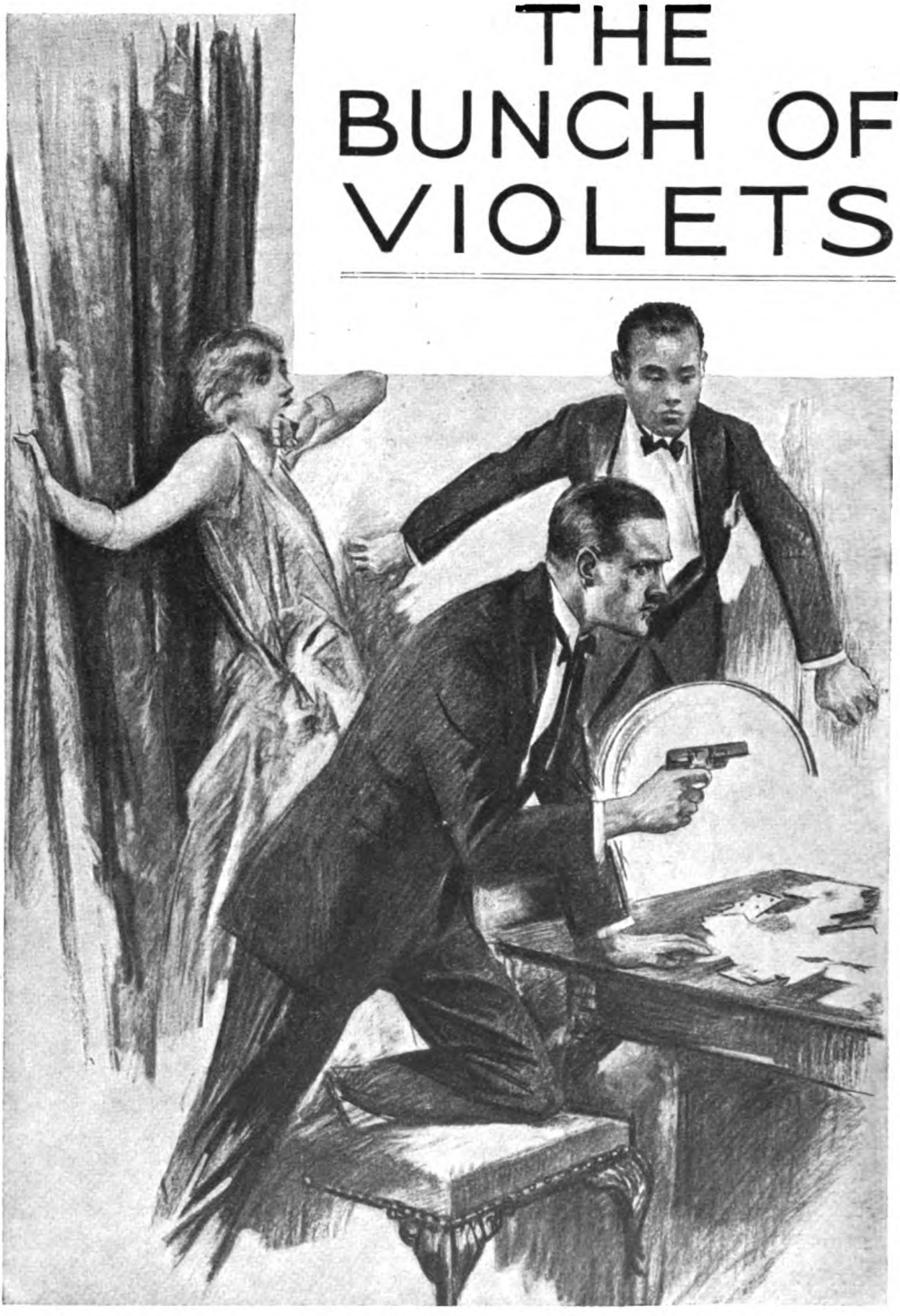
'Phone: Central 7077

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

July, 1924

OCHPRA
HALTO
EE LIBRARY

THE BUNCH OF VIOLETS



"Quick!" Darragh rapped out. "I'll give you up to three, and if the key isn't out then I'll plug you, Hulse! One, two——"

ENOCH PRATT
BALTO.
FREE LIBRARY

A REMARKABLE STORY OF

MAX CARRADOS, THE BLIND DETECTIVE.

By

ERNEST BRAMAH

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

WHEN Mr. J. Beringer Hulse, in the course of one of his periodical calls at the War Office, had been introduced to Max Carrados he attached no particular significance to the meeting. His own business there lay with Mr. Flinders, one of the quite inconspicuous departmental powers so lavishly produced by a few years of intensive warfare: business that was more confidential than exacting at that stage and hitherto carried on *à deux*. The presence on this occasion of a third, this quiet, suave, personable stranger, was not out of line with Mr. Hulse's open-minded generalities on British methods. "A little singular, perhaps, but not remarkable," would have been the extent of his private comment. He favoured Max with a hard, entirely friendly, American stare, said: "Vurry pleased to make your acquaintance.

Mr. Carrados," as they shook hands, and went on with his own affair.

Of course, Hulse was not to know that Carrados had been brought in on that occasion especially to genialize with him. Most of the blind man's activities during that period came within the " Q-class " order. No one ever heard of them, very often they would have seemed meaningless under description, and generally they were things that he alone could do—or do as effectively, at all events. In the obsolete phraseology of the day, they were his " bit."

" There's this man Hulse," Flinders had proceeded, when it came to the business on which Carrados had been asked to call at Whitehall. " Needless to say, he's no fool or Jonathan wouldn't have sent him on the ticket he carries. If anything, he's too keen—wants to see everything, do anything, and go everywhere. In the meanwhile he's kicking up his heels here in London with endless time on his hands, and the Lord only knows who mayn't have a go at him."

" You mean for information—or does he carry papers ? " asked Carrados.

" Well, at present information chiefly. He necessarily knows a lot of things that would be priceless to the Huns, and a clever man or woman might find it profitable to nurse him."

" Still, he must be on his guard if, as you say, he is—— No one imagines that London in 1917 is a snakeless Eden or expects that German agents to-day are elderly professors who say, ' How vos you ? ' and ' Ja, ja ! ' "

" He's quite an agreeable chap, you'll find. He may know a trifle more than you and be a little wider awake and see farther through a brick wall and so on, but he won't hurt your feelings about it. Well, will you do it for us ? "

" Certainly," replied Carrados. " What is it, by the way ? "

Flinders laughed his apologies and explained more precisely.

" Hulse has been over here a month now, and it may be another month before the details come through which he will take on to Paris. Then he will certainly have documents of very special importance that he must carry about with him. Well, in the meanwhile, of course he is entertained, and may pal up with anyone or get himself into Lord knows what. We can't keep him here under lock and key or expect him to make a report of every fellow he has a drink with or every girl he meets."

" Quite so," nodded the blind man.

' Actually, we have been asked to take precautions. It isn't quite a case for the C.I.D.—not at this stage, that is to say. So if I introduce him to you and you fix up an evening for him or something of the sort, and find out where his tastes lie and—and, in fact, keep a general shepherding eye upon him——" He broke off abruptly and Carrados divined that he had reddened furiously and was kicking himself in spirit. The blind man raised a deprecating hand.

" Why should you think that so neat a compliment would pain me, Flinders ? " he asked quietly. " Now, if you had questioned the genuineness of some of my favourite tetradrachms I might have had reason to be annoyed. As it is, yes, I will gladly keep a general shepherding ear on J. Beringer as long as may be needful."

" That's curious," said Flinders, looking up quickly. " I didn't think that I had mentioned his front name."

" I don't think that you have," agreed Carrados.

" Then how—— Had you heard of him before ? "

" You don't give an amateur conjurer much chance," replied the other, whimsically. " When you brought me to this chair I found a table by me, and happening to rest a hand on it, my fingers had ' read ' a line of writing before I realized it—just as your glance might as unconsciously do," and he held up an envelope addressed to Hulse.

" That is about the limit," exclaimed Flinders, with some emphasis. " Do you know, Carrados, if I hadn't always led a very blameless life I should be afraid to have you around the place."

THUS it came about that the introduction was made, and in due course the two callers left together.

' You'll see Mr. Carrados down, won't you ? " Flinders had asked, and slightly puzzled, but not disposed to question English ways, Hulse had assented. In the passage Carrados laid a light hand on his companion's arm. Through some subtle perception he read Hulse's mild surprise.

" By the way, I don't think that Flinders mentioned my infirmity," he remarked. " This part of the building is new to me, and I happen to be quite blind."

" You astonish me," declared Hulse, and he had to be assured that the statement was literally exact.

They had reached the street meanwhile, and Carrados heard the door of his waiting car opened to receive him.

" I'm going on to my club now to lunch," he remarked, with his hand still on his companion's arm. " Of course, we only have a war-time menu, but if you would keep me company you would be acting the Good Samaritan."

" Vurry kind of you to put it in that way, Mr. Carrados," he said, in his slightly

businesslike, easy style. "Why, certainly I will."

During the following weeks Carrados continued to make himself very useful to the visitor, and Hulse did not find his stay in London any less agreeably varied thereby. He had a few other friends—acquaintances rather—he had occasion now and then to mention, but they, one might infer, were either not quite so expansive in their range of hospitality or so pressing for his company. The only one for whom he had ever to excuse himself was a Mr. Darragh, who appeared to have a house in Densham Gardens (he was a little shrewdly curious as to what might be inferred of the status of a man who lived in Densham Gardens), and, well, yes, there was Darragh's sister, Violet. Carrados began to take a private interest in the Darragh household, but there was little to be learned beyond the fact that the house was let furnished to the occupant from month to month. Even during the complexities of war that fact alone could not be regarded as particularly incriminating.

There came an evening when Hulse, having an appointment to dine with Carrados and to escort him to a theatre afterwards, presented himself in a mixed state of elation and remorse. His number had come through at last, he explained, and he was to leave for Paris in the morning. Carrados had been most awfully, most frightfully—— Hulse became quite touchingly incoherent in his anxiety to impress upon the blind man the fullness of the gratitude he felt, but, all the same, he had come to ask whether he might cry off for the evening. There was no need to inquire the cause. Carrados raised an accusing finger and pointed to the little bunch of violets with which the impressionable young man had adorned his buttonhole.

"Why, yes, to some extent," admitted Hulse, with a facile return to his ingenuous easy way. "I happened to see Miss Darragh down town this afternoon. There's a man they know whom I've been crazy to meet for weeks, a Jap who has the whole ju-jitsu business at his finger-ends. Best ju-jitsuist out of Japan, Darragh says. Mighty useful thing, ju-jitsu, nowadays, Carrados."

"At any time, indeed," conceded Carrados. "And he will be there to-night?"

"Certain. They've tried to fix it up for me half-a-dozen times before, but this Kuromi could never fit it in. Of course, this will be the only chance."

"True," agreed the blind man, rather absent-mindedly. "Your last night here."

"I don't say that in any case I should not have liked to see Violet—Miss Darragh—again before I went, but I wouldn't have gone back on an arranged thing for that," continued Hulse, virtuously. "Now this ju-jitsu I look on more in the light of business."

"Rather a rough-and-tumble business, one would think," suggested Carrados. "Nothing likely to drop out of your pockets in the process and get lost?"

Hulse's face displayed a rather more superior smile than he would have permitted himself had his friend been liable to see it and be snubbed thereby.

"I know what you mean, of course," he replied, getting up and going to the blind man's chair, "but don't you worry about me, Father William. Just put your hand to my breast-pocket."

"Sewn up," commented Carrados, touching the indicated spot on his guest's jacket.

"Sewn up: that's it; and since I've had any important papers on me it always has been sewn up, no matter how often I change. No fear of anything dropping out now—or being lifted out, eh? No, *sir*; if what I carry there chanced to vanish, I guess no excuses would be taken and J. B. H. would automatically drop down to the very bottom of the class. As it is, if it's missing I shall be missing too, so that won't trouble me."

"What time do you want to get there?"

"Darragh's? Well, I left that open. Of course, I couldn't promise until I had seen you. Anyway, not until after dinner, I said."

"That makes it quite simple, then," declared Carrados. "Stay and have dinner here and afterwards we will go on to Darragh's together, instead of going to the theatre."

"That's most terribly kind of you," replied Hulse. "But won't it be rather a pity—the tickets, I mean, and so forth?"

"There are no tickets, as it happens," said Carrados. "I left that over until to-night. And I have always wanted to meet a ju-jitsu champion. Quite providential, isn't it?"

IT was nearly nine o'clock, and seated in the drawing-room of his furnished house in Densham Gardens, affecting to read an evening paper, Mr. Darragh was plainly ill at ease. The strokes of the hour, sounded by the little gilt clock on the mantelpiece, seemed to mark the limit of his patience. A muttered word escaped him, and he looked up with a frown.

"It was nine that Hulse was to be here by, wasn't it, Violet?" he asked.

Miss Darragh, who had been regarding him for some time in furtive anxiety, almost jumped at the simple question.

"Oh, yes, Hugh—about nine, that is. Of course, he had to——"

Carrados pointed to the little bunch of violets with which the impressionable young man had adorned his buttonhole.

"Yes, yes," interrupted Darragh, irritably; "we've heard all that. And Sims," he continued, more for the satisfaction of voicing his annoyance than to engage in conversation, "swore by everything that we should have that coat by eight at the very latest. My God! what rotten tools one has to depend on!"

"Perhaps——" began Violet, timidly, and stopped at his deepening scowl.

"Yes?" said Darragh, with a deadly smoothness in his voice. "Yes, Violet; pray continue. You were about to say——"

"It was really nothing, Hugh," she pleaded. "Nothing at all."

"Oh, yes, Violet, I am sure that you have some helpful little suggestion to make," he went on, in the same silky, deliberate way. Even when he was silent his unspoken thoughts seemed to be lashing her with bitterness, and she turned painfully away to pick up the paper he had flung aside. "The situation, Kato," resumed Darragh, addressing himself to the third occupant of the room, "is bluntly this: If Sims isn't here with that coat before young Hulse arrives, all our carefully-thought-out plan, a month's patient work, and about the last both of our cash and credit, simply go to the devil!—and Violet wants to say that perhaps Mr. Sims forgot to wind his watch last night or poor Mrs. Sims's cough is worse. Proceed, Violet; don't be diffident."

The man addressed as "Kato" knocked a piece off the chessboard he was studying and stooped to pick it up again before he replied. Then he looked from one to the other with a face singularly devoid of expression.

"Perhaps. Who says?" he replied, in his quaintly-ordered phrases. "If it is to be, my friend, it will be."

"Besides, Hugh," put in Violet, with a faint dash of spirit, "it isn't really quite so touch-and-go as that. If Sims comes before Hulse has left, Kato can easily slip out and change coats then."

Darragh was already on his restless way towards the door. Apparently he did not think it worth while to reply to either of the speakers, but his expression, especially when his eyes turned to Violet, was one of active contempt. As the door closed after him Kato sprang to his feet and his impassive look gave place to one almost of menace. His hands clenched unconsciously, and with slow footsteps he seemed to be drawn on in pursuit. A little laugh, mirthless and bitter, from the couch, where Violet had seated herself, recalled him.

"Is it true, Katie," she asked, idly, "that you are really the greatest ju-jitsuist outside Japan?"

"Polite other people say so," replied the Japanese, his voice at once gentle and deprecating.

"And yet you cannot keep down even your little temper!"

Kato thought this over for a moment; then he crossed to the couch and stood regarding the girl with his usual impenetrable gravity.

"On contrary I can keep down my temper very well," he said, seriously. "I can keep it so admirably that I, whose ancestors were Samurai and very high nobles, have been able to become thief and swindler, and"—his moving hand seemed to beat the air for a phrase—"and low-down dog and still to live. What does anything it matter that is connected with me alone? But there are three things that do matter—three that I do not allow myself to be insulted and still to live: my emperor, my country, and—you. And so," concluded Kato Kuromi, in a somewhat lighter vein, "now and then, as you say, my temper gets the better of me slightly."

"Poor Katie," said Violet, by no means disconcerted at this delicate avowal. "I really think that I am sorrier for you than I am for Hugh, or even for myself. But it's no good becoming romantic at this time of day, my dear man." The lines of her still quite young and attractive face hardened in keeping with her thoughts. "I suppose I've had my chance. We're all of a pattern, and I'm as crooked as any of you now."

"No, no," protested Kato, loyally; "not you of yourself. It is we bad fellows round you. Darragh ought never to have brought you into these things, and then to despise you for your troubles—that is why my temper now and then ju-jitsues me. This time it is the worst of all—the young man Hulse, for whose benefit you pass yourself as the sister of your husband. How any mortal man possessing you——"

"Another cigarette, Katie, please," interrupted Violet, for the monotonous voice had become slightly more penetrating than was prudent. "That's all in the way of business, my friend. We aren't a firm of family solicitors. Jack Hulse had to be fascinated, and I—well, if there is any hitch I don't think that it can be called my fault," and she demonstrated for his benefit the bewitching smile that had so effectually enslaved the ardent Beringer.

"Fascinated!" retorted Kato, fixing on the word jealously, and refusing to be pacified by the bribery of the smile. "Yes, so infatuated has become this very susceptible young man that you lead him about like pet lamb at the end of blue ribbon. Business? Perhaps. But *how* have you been able to do this, Violet? And your husband—Darragh—to him simply business, very good business—and he forces you to do this full of shame thing and mocks at you for reward."

"Kato, Kato——" urged Violet, breaking through his scornful laughter.

"I am what your people call yellow man," continued Kato, relentlessly, "and you are the one white woman of my dreams—dreams that I would not lift finger to spoil by trying to make real. But if I should have been Darragh not ten thousand times the ten thousand pounds that Hulse carries would tempt me to lend you to another man's arms."

"Oh, Katie, how horrid you can be!"

"Horrid for me to say, but 'business' for you to do! How have you discovered so much, Violet—what Hulse carries, where he carries it, the size and shape the packet makes, even the way he so securely keeps it? 'Business,' eh? Your husband cares not so long as we succeed. But I, Kato Kuromi, care." He went nearer, so that his mere attitude was menacing as he stood over her, and his usually smooth voice changed to a tone she had never heard there before. "*How* have you learned all this? How, unless you and Hulse——"

"'Sssh!" she exclaimed, in sharp dismay, as her ear caught a sound beyond.

"——Oh, yes," continued Kato, easily, his voice instantly as soft and unconcerned as ever, "it will be there you mean. The views in the valley of Kedu are considered very fine, and the river itself——"

IT was Darragh whom Violet had heard approaching, and he entered the room in a much better temper than he had left it. At the door he paused a moment to encourage someone forward—a seedy, diffident man of more than middle age who carried a brown-paper parcel.

"Come on, Sims; hurry up, man!" urged Darragh, impatiently, but without the sting of contempt that had poisoned his speech before. "And, oh, Phillips," looking back and dropping his voice, "when Mr. Hulse arrives show him into the morning room at first. Not up here, you understand? Now, Sims."

After a rather helpless look round for something suitable on which to lay his parcel, the woebegone-looking individual was attempting to untie it on an upraised knee.

"Yes, sir," he replied, endeavouring to impart a modicum of briskness into his manner. "I'm sorry to be a bit late, sir; I was delayed."

"Oh, well, never mind that now," said Darragh, magnanimously. "Thing quite all right?"

"Mrs. Sims isn't worse?" asked Violet, kindly.

Mr. Sims managed to get his back to the group before he ventured to reply.

"No, miss," he said, huskily; "she's better now. She's dead; died a hour ago. That's why I wasn't quite able to get here by eight."

From each of his hearers this tragedy drew a characteristic response. Violet gave a little moan of sympathy and turned away. Kato regarded Sims, and continued to regard him, with the tranquil incuriosity of the unpitying East. Darragh—Darragh alone spoke, and his tone was almost genial.

"Devilish lucky that you were able to get here by now in the circumstances, Sims," he said.

"Well, sir," replied Sims, practically, "you see I shall need the money just as much now—though not quite for the same purpose as I had planned." He took the garment from the paper and shook it out before displaying it for Darragh's approval. "I think you will find that quite satisfactory, sir."

"Exactly the same as the one your people made for Mr. Hulse a week ago?" asked Darragh, glancing at the jacket and then passing it on to Violet for her verdict.

"To a stitch, sir. A friend of mine up at the shop got the measurements and the cloth is a length from the same piece."

"But the cut, Sims," persisted his patron, keenly; "the cut is the most important thing about it. It makes all the difference in the world."

"Yes, sir," acquiesced Sims, dispassionately; "you can rely on that. I used to be a first-class cutter myself before I took to drink. I am yet, when I'm steady. And I machined both coats myself."

"That should do, then," said Darragh, complacently. "Now you were to have——"

"Ten guineas and the cost of the cloth, you promised, sir. Of course, it's a very big price, and I won't deny that I've been a bit uneasy about it from time to time when I——"

"That's all right." Darragh had no wish to keep Mr. Sims in evidence a minute longer than was necessary.

"I shouldn't like to be doing anything wrong, sir," persisted the poor creature; "and when you stipulated that it wasn't to be mentioned——"

"Well, well, man; it's a bet, didn't I tell you? I stand to win a clear hundred if I can fool Hulse over this coat. That's the long and short of it."

"I'm sure I hope it is, sir. I've never been in trouble for anything yet, and it would break my wife's 'art——" He stopped suddenly and his weak face changed to a recollection of his loss; then without another word he turned and made shakily for the door.

"See him safely away, Katty, and pay him down below," said Darragh. "I'll settle with you later," and the Japanese, with a careless "All right-o," followed.

"Now, Violet, slip into it," continued her husband, briskly. "We don't want to keep Hulse waiting when he comes." From a drawer in a cabinet near at hand he took a paper packet, prepared in readiness, and passed it to her. "You have the right cotton?"

"Yes, Hugh," said Violet, opening a little work-basket. She had already satisfied herself that the coat was a replica of the one the young American would wear, and she now transferred the dummy package to the corresponding pocket, and with a few deft stitches secured it in the same way as she had already learned that the real contents were safeguarded. "And, Hugh——"

"Well, well?" responded Darragh, with a return of his old impatience.

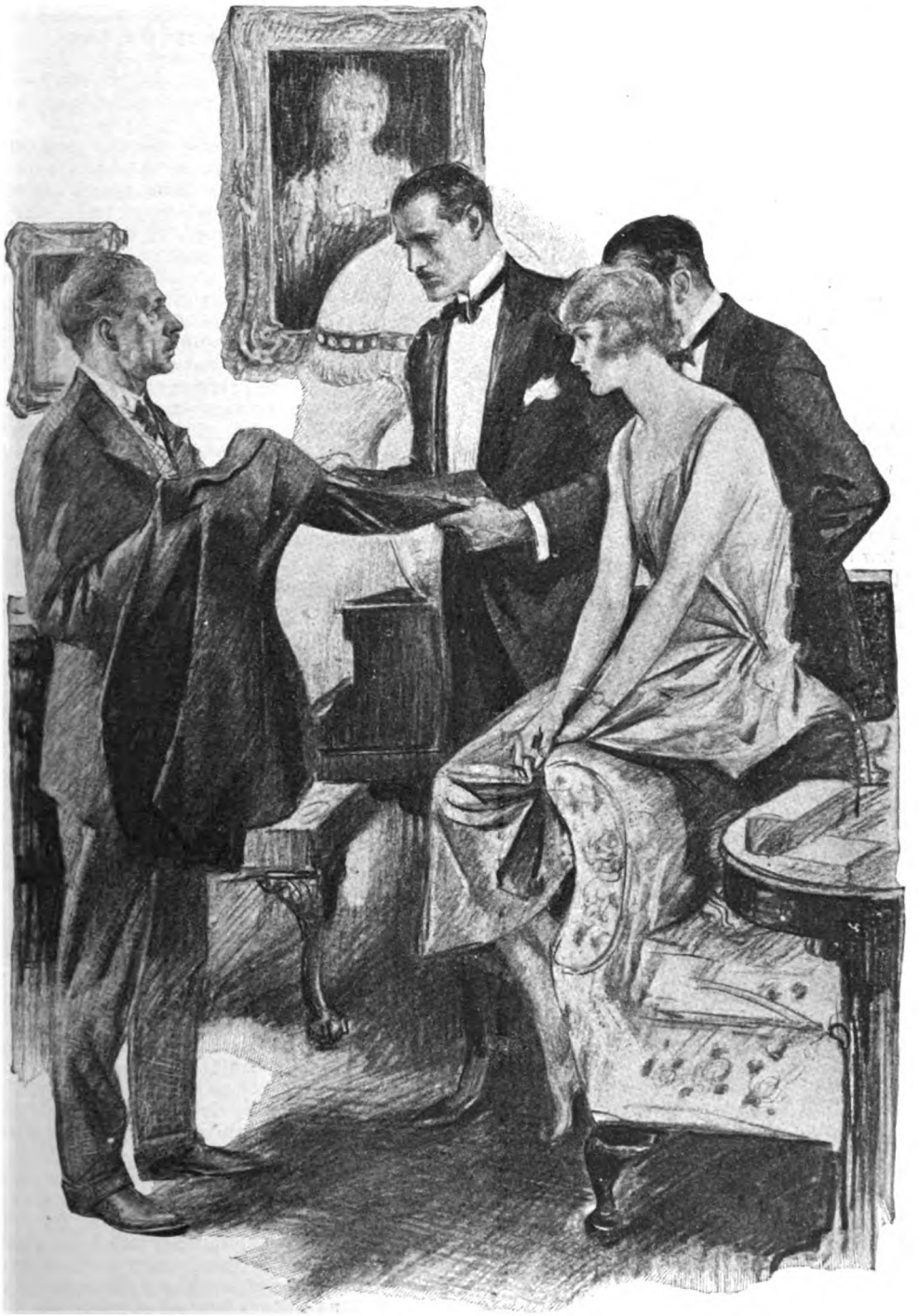
"I don't wish to know all your plans, Hugh," continued Violet, meekly, "but I do want to warn you. You are running a most tremendous risk with Kato."

"Oh, Kato!"

"It is really serious, Hugh. You don't believe in patriotism, I know, but Kato happens to. When he learns that it isn't ten thousand pounds at all, but confidential war plans that this scoop consists of, something terrible may happen."

"It might, Violet. Therefore I haven't told him, and I am so arranging things that he will never know. Cheer up, my girl, there will be no tragedy. All the same, thanks for the hint. It shows a proper regard for your husband's welfare."

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" murmured Violet; "if only you were more often——"



"I think you will find that quite satisfactory, sir."

"Exactly the same as the one your people made for Mr. Hulse a week ago?" asked Darragh, glancing at the jacket.

WHATEVER might have been the result—if indeed there was yet hope in an appeal to another and a better nature that he might once have possessed—it came too late. The words were interrupted by the sudden reappearance of Kato, his business with Sims completed. He opened and closed the door quietly but very quickly, and at a glance both the Darraghs saw that something unforeseen had happened.

"Here's pretty go," reported the Japanese. "Hulse just come and brought someone with him!"

For a moment all the conspirators stood aghast at the unexpected complication. Hugh Darragh was the first to speak.

"Damnation!" he exclaimed, with a terrible look in his wife's direction; "that may upset everything. What ghastly muddle have you made now?"

"I—I don't know," pleaded Violet weakly. "I never dreamt of such a thing. Are you sure?"

"Slow man," amplified Kato, with a nod. "Fellow who walk——" He made a few steps with slow deliberation.

"Blind! It's Max Carrados," exclaimed Violet, in a flash of enlightenment. "They have been great friends lately and Jack has often spoken of him. He's most awfully clever in his way, but stone blind. Hugh, Kato, don't you see? It's rather unfortunate him being here, but it can't really make any difference."

"True, if he is quite blind," admitted Kato.

"I'll look into it," said Darragh, briskly. "Coat's all ready for you, Kato."

"I think no, yet," soliloquized the Japanese, critically examining it. "Keep door, 'alf-a-mo', Violet, if please." His own contribution to the coat's appearance was simple but practical—a gentle tension here and there, a general rumple, a dust on the floor, and a final shake. "One week wear," he announced gravely, as he changed into it and hid his own away.

"Take your time, Mr. Carrados," Darragh's voice was heard insisting on the stairs outside, and the next moment he stood just inside the room and, before Hulse had quite guided Carrados into view, drew Violet's attention to the necessity of removing the buttonhole that the American still wore by a significant movement to the lapel of his own coat. It required no great finesse on the girl's part to effect the transfer of the little bunch of flowers to her own person within five minutes of the guests' arrival.

"A new friend to see you, Violet—Mr. Carrados," announced Darragh, most graciously. "Mr. Carrados, my sister."

"Not to *see* you exactly, Miss Darragh," amplified Carrados. "But none the less to know you as well as if I did, I hope."

"I wanted you to meet Max before I went, Miss Darragh," explained Hulse. "So I took the liberty of bringing him round."

"You really *are* going, then?" she asked.

"Yes. There seems no doubt about it this time. Twelve hours from now I hope to be in Paris. I should say," amended the ingenuous young man, "I *dread* to be in Paris, for it may mean a long absence. That's where I rely on Carrados to become what is called a 'connecting file' between us—to cheer my solitude by letting me know when he has met you, or heard of you, or, well, anything in fact."

"Take care, Mr. Hulse," she said. "Gallantry by proxy is a dangerous game."

"That's just it," retorted Hulse. "Max is the only man I shouldn't be jealous of—because he can't see you!"

While these amiable exchanges were being carried on between the two young people, with Max Carrados standing benignly by, Darragh found an opportunity to lower his voice for Kato's benefit.

"It's all right about him," he declared. "We carry on."

"As we arranged?" asked Kato.

"Yes; exactly. Come across now." He raised his voice as he led Kato towards the other group. "I don't think that either of you has met Mr. Kuromi yet—Mr. Hulse, Mr. Carrados."

"I have been pining to meet you for weeks, sir," responded Hulse, with enthusiasm. "Mr. Darragh tells me what a wonderful master of ju-jitsu you are."

"Oh, well; little knack, you know," replied Kato, modestly. "You are interested?"

"Yes, indeed. I regard it as a most useful accomplishment at any time, and particularly now. I only wish I'd taken it up when I had the leisure."

"Let me find you an easy chair, Mr. Carrados," said Violet, attentively. "I am sure that *you* won't be interested in so strenuous a subject as ju-jitsu."

"Oh, yes, I am, though," protested the blind man. "I am interested in everything."

"But surely——"

"I can't actually see the ju-jitsuing, you would say? Quite true, but do you know, Miss Darragh, that makes a great deal less difference than you might imagine. I have my sense of touch, my sense of taste, my hearing—even my unromantic nose—and you would hardly believe how they have rallied to my assistance since sight went. For instance——"

They had reached the chair to which Miss

Darragh had piloted him. To guide him into it she had taken both his hands, but now Carrados had gently disengaged himself and was lightly holding her left hand between both of his.

"For instance, Hulse and I were speaking of you the other day—forgive our impertinence—and he happened to mention that you disliked rings of any sort and had never worn one. His eyes, you see, and perhaps a careless remark on your part. Now I *know* that until quite recently you continually wore a ring upon this finger."

SILENCE had fallen upon the other men as they followed Carrados's exposition. Into the moment of embarrassment that succeeded this definite pronouncement Mr. Hulse threw a cheerful note.

"Oh-ho, Max, you've come a cropper this time!" he exclaimed. "Miss Darragh has never worn a ring. Have you?"

"N-no," replied Violet, a little uncertain of her ground, as the blind man continued to smile benevolently upon her.

"A smooth and rather broad one," he continued, persuasively. "Possibly a wedding-ring?"

"Wait a minute, Violet, wait a minute," interposed Darragh, endeavouring to look judicially wise with head bent to one side. He was doubtful if Violet could carry the point without incurring some suspicion, and he decided to give her a lead out of it. "Didn't I see you wearing some sort of plain ring a little time ago? You have forgotten, but I really believe Mr. Carrados may be right. Think again."

"Of course!" responded Violet, readily; "how stupid of me! It was my mother's wedding-ring. I found it in an old desk and wore it to keep it safe. That was really how I found out that I could not bear the feel of one, and I soon gave it up."

"What did I say?" claimed Darragh, genially. "I thought that we should be right."

"This is really much interesting," said Kato. "I very greatly like your system, Mr. Carrados."

"Oh, it's scarce'y a system," deprecated Max, good-naturedly; "it's almost second nature with me now. I don't have to consider, say, 'Where is the window?' if I want it. I know with certainty that the window lies over here." He had not yet taken the chair provided, and suiting the action to the word he now took a few steps towards the wall where the windows actually were. "Am I not right?" And to assure himself he stretched out a hand and encountered the heavy curtains.

"Yes, yes," admitted Violet, hurriedly; "but, oh, please do be careful, Mr. Carrados. They are most awfully particular about the light here since the last raid. We go in fear and trembling lest a glimmer should escape."

Carrados smiled and nodded and withdrew from the dangerous area. He faced the room again.

"Then there is the electric light—heat at a certain height, of course."

"True," assented Kato; "but why *electric* light?"

"Because no other is noiseless and entirely without smell. Think: gas, oil, candles, all betray their composition yards away. Then"—indicating—"the fireplace. I suppose you can only smell soot in damp weather? The mantelpiece"—touching it—"inlaid marble. The wall-paper"—brushing his hand over its surface—"arrangement of pansies on a criss-cross background"—lifting one finger to his lips—"colour scheme largely green and gold."

Possibly Mr. Hulse thought that his friend had demonstrated his qualities quite enough. Possibly—— At any rate, he now created a diversion.

"Engraving of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, suspended two feet seven inches from the ceiling on a brass-headed nail supplied by a one-legged ironmonger whose Aunt Jane——"

All contributed a sufficiently appreciative laugh—Carrados's not the least hearty—except Kato, whose Asiatic dignity was proof against the form of jesting.

"You see what contempt familiarity breeds, Miss Darragh," remarked the blind man. "I look to you, Mr. Kuromi, to avenge me by putting Hulse in a variety of undignified attitudes on the floor."

"Oh, I sha'n't mind that if at the same time you put me up to a trick or two," said Hulse, turning to the Japanese.

"You wish?"

"Indeed I do. I've seen the use of it. It's good; it's scientific. When I was crossing, one of the passengers held up a bully twice his weight in the neatest way possible. It looked quite simple, something like this, if I may?" Kato nodded his grave assent and submitted himself to Mr. Hulse's vigorous grasp. "'Now,' said the man I'm speaking of, 'struggle and your right arm's broken.' But I expect you know the grip?"

"Oh, yes," replied Kato, veiling his private amusement, "and therefore foolish to struggle. Expert does not struggle; gives way." He appeared to do so, to be falling helplessly in fact, but the assailant found himself compelled to follow, and the next moment he was lying on his back with Kato politely extending a hand to assist him up again.

"I must remember that," said Hulse, thoughtfully. "Let me see, it goes—do you mind putting me wise on that again, Mr. Kuromi? The motion picture just one iota slower this time, please."

For the next ten or twenty minutes the demonstration went on in admirable good humour, and could Max Carrados have seen he would certainly have witnessed his revenge. At the end of the lesson both men were warm and dusty—so dusty that Miss Darragh felt called upon to apologize laughingly for the condition of the rug. But if clothes were dusty hands were positively dirty—there was no other word for it.

"No, really, the poor mat can't be so bad as that," declared the girl. "Wherever have you been, Mr. Kuromi? And, oh, Mr. Hulse, you are just as bad!"

"I do not know," declared Kato, regarding his grimy fingers seriously. "Nowhere of myself. Yes, I think it must be your London atmosphere among the rug after all."

"At all events, you can't—— Oh, Hugh, take them to the bathroom, will you? And I'll try to entertain Mr. Carrados meanwhile—only he will entertain me instead, I know."

It was well and simply done throughout—nothing forced, and the sequence of development quite natural. Indeed, it was not until Hulse saw Kuromi take off his coat in the bathroom that he even thought of what he carried. "Well, Carrados," he afterwards pleaded to his friend, "now could I wash my hands before those fellows like a guy who isn't used to washing? It isn't natural. It isn't human." So for those few minutes the two coats hung side by side, and Darragh kindly brushed them. When Hulse put on his own again his hand instinctively felt for the hidden packet; his fingers reassured themselves among the familiar objects of his pockets, and his mind was perfectly at ease.

"YOU old scoundrel, Max," he said, when he returned to the drawing-room. "You told Kuromi to wipe the floor with me, and, by crumbs, he did! Have a cigarette all the same?"

Miss Darragh laughed pleasantly and took the opportunity to move away to learn from her accomplices if all had gone well. Carrados was on the point of passing over the proffered olive branch when he changed his mind. He leaned forward and with slow deliberation chose a cigarette from the American's case. Exactly when the first subtle monition of treachery reached him—by what sense it was conveyed—Hulse never learned, for there were experiences among the finer perceptions that the blind man did not willingly discuss. Not by voice or outward manner in that arresting moment did he betray an inkling of his suspicion, yet by some responsive telephony Hulse at once, though scarcely conscious of it then, grew uneasy and alert.

"Thanks; I'll take a light from yours," remarked Carrados, ignoring the lit match, and he rose to avail himself. With cool precision he handled the cloth on Hulse's outstretched arm, critically touched the pocket he was already familiar with, and then deliberately drew the lapel to his face.

"You wore some violets?" he said beneath his breath.

"Yes," replied Hulse, "but I—Miss Darragh——"

"But there never have been any *here!* By heavens, Hulse, we're in it! You had your coat off just now?"

"Yes, for a minute——"

"Quietly. Keep your cigarette going. You'll have to leave this to me. Back me up—discreetly—whatever I do."

"Can't we challenge it and insist——"

"Not in this world. They have at least one other man downstairs—in Cairo, a Turk by the way, before I was blind, of course. Not up to Mr. Kuromi, I expect——"

"Cool again?" asked Miss Darragh, sociably. It was her approach that had sent Carrados off into irrelevancies. "Was the experience up to anticipation?"

"Yes, I think I may say it was," admitted Hulse, guardedly. "There is certainly a lot to learn here. I expect you've seen it all before?"

"Oh, no. It is a great honour to get Mr. Kuromi to 'show it off,' as he quaintly calls it."

"Yes, I should say so," replied the disillusionized young man with deadly simplicity. "I quite feel that."

"J. B. H. is getting strung up," thought Carrados to himself. "He may say something unfortunate presently." So he deftly insinuated himself into the conversation, and for a few minutes the commonplaces of the topic were rigidly maintained.

"Care for a hand at auction?" suggested Darragh, joining the group. He had no desire to keep his guests a minute longer than he need, but at the same time it was his line to behave quite naturally until they left. "Oh, but I forgot—Mr. Carrados——"

"I am well content to sit and listen," Carrados assured him. "Consider how often I have to do that without the entertainment of a game to listen to! And you are four without me."

"It really hardly seems——" began Violet.

"I'm sure Max will feel it if he thinks

"Quietly," said Max. "Keep your cigarette going. You'll have to leave this to me. Back me up—discreetly—whatever I do."

that he is depriving us," put in Hulse loyally, so with some more polite protestation it was arranged and the game began, Carrados remaining where he was. In the circumstances a very high standard of bridge could not be looked for; the calling was a little wild; the play more than a little loose; the laughter rather shrill or rather flat; the conversation between the hands forced and spasmodic. All were playing for time in their several interpretations of it; the blind man alone was thinking beyond the immediate moment.

Presently there was a more genuine burst of laughter than any hitherto. Kato had revoked, and, confronted with it, had made a naive excuse. Carrados rose with the intention of going nearer when a distressing

thing occurred. Half-way across the room he seemed to slip, plunged forward helplessly, and came to the floor, involved in a light table as he fell. All the players were on their feet in an instant. Darragh assisted his guest to rise; Violet took an arm; Kato looked about the floor curiously, and Hulse—Hulse stared hard at Max and wondered what the thunder this portended.

"Clumsy, clumsy," murmured Carrados beneath his breath. "Forgive me, Miss Darragh."

"Oh, Mr. Carrados!" she exclaimed, in genuine distress. "Aren't you really hurt?"

"Not a bit of it," he declared, lightly. "Or, at all events," he amended, bearing rather more heavily upon her support as he took a step, "nothing to speak of."

"Here is pencil," said Kuromi, picking one up from the polished floor. "You must have slipped on this."

"Stepping on a pencil is like that," contributed Hulse, wisely. "It acts as a kind of roller-skate."

"Please don't interrupt the game any more," pleaded the victim. "At the most, at the very worst, it is only—oh!—a negligible strain."

"I don't know that any strain, especially of the ankle, is negligible, Mr. Carrados," said Darragh, with cunning foresight. "I think it perhaps ought to be seen to."

"A compress when I get back will be all that is required," protested Carrados. "I should hate to break up the evening."

"Don't consider that for a moment," urged the host, hospitably. "If you really think that it would be wiser in the end——"

"Well, perhaps——" assented the other, weakening in his resolution.

"Shall I 'phone up a taxi?" asked Violet.

"Thank you, if you would be so kind—or, no; perhaps my own car would be rather easier in the circumstances. My man will be about, so that it will take very little longer."

"I'll get through for you," volunteered Darragh. "What's your number?"

The telephone was in a corner of the room. The connection was soon obtained and Darragh turned to his guest for the message.

"I'd better speak," said Carrados—he had limped across on Hulse's arm—taking over the receiver. "Excellent fellow, but he'd probably conclude that I'd been killed. . . . That you, Parkinson?—Yes, at 155, Densham Gardens. I'm held up here by a slight accident.—No, no, nothing serious, but I might have some difficulty in getting back without assistance. Tell Harris I shall need him after all, as soon as he can get here—the car that's handiest. That's—oh, and, Parkinson, bring along a couple of substantial walking sticks with you. Any time now. That's all.—Yes—Yes." He put up the receiver with a thrill of satisfaction that he had got his message safely through. "Held up"—a phrase at once harmless and significant—was the arranged shift-key into code. It was easy for a blind man to receive some hurt that held him up. Once or twice Carrados's investigations had got him into tight places, but in one way or another he had invariably got out again.

"How far is your place away?" someone asked, and out of the reply a time-marking conversation on the subject of getting about London's darkened streets and locomotion in general arose. Under cover of this Kato drew Darragh aside to the deserted card-table.

"Not your pencil, Darragh?" he said, quietly, displaying the one he had picked up.

"No; why?"

"I not altogether like this, is why," replied the Japanese. "I think it Carrados own pencil. That man have too many ways of doing things, Darragh. It was mistake to let him 'phone."

"Oh, nonsense; you heard what he said. Don't get jumpy, man. The thing has gone like clockwork."

"So far, yes. But I think I better go now and come back in one hour or so. Safer for all much."

Darragh, for very good reasons, had the strongest objections to allowing his accomplice an opportunity of examining the spoil alone. "Look here, Katty," he said, with decision, "I must have you in case there does come a scrimmage. I'll tell Phillips to fasten the front door well and then we can see that it's all right before anyone comes in. If it is, there's no need for you to run away; if there's the least doubt we can knock these two out and have plenty of time to clear by the back way we've got." Without giving Kato any chance of raising further objection he turned to his guests again.

"I think I remember your tastes, Hulse," he said, suavely. "I hope that you have no objection to Scotch whisky, Mr. Carrados? We still have a few bottles left. Or perhaps you prefer champagne?"

Carrados had very little intention of drinking anything in that house, nor did he think that with ordinary procrastination it would be necessary.

"You are very kind," he replied, tentatively. "Should you permit the invalid either, Miss Darragh?"

"Oh, yes, in moderation," she smiled. "I think I hear your car," she added, and stepping to the window ventured to peep out.

IT was true. Mr. Darragh had run it a shade too fine for once. For a moment he hesitated which course to take—to see who was arriving or to convey a warning to his henchman down below. He had turned towards the door when Violet's startled voice recalled him to the window.

"Hugh!" she called, sharply. "Here, Hugh"; and as he reached her, in a breathless whisper, "There are men inside the car—two more at least."

Darragh had to decide very quickly this time. His choice was not without its element of fineness. "Go down and see about it, Katty," he said, looking Kato straight in the eyes. "And tell Phillips about the whisky."

"Door locked," said the Japanese tersely. "Key other side."

"The key was on this side," exclaimed Darragh, fiercely. "Hulse——"

"Hell!" retorted Beringer, expressively. "That jacket doesn't go out of the room without me this journey."

Darragh had him covered before he had finished speaking.

"Quick!" he rapped out. "I'll give you up to three, and if the key isn't out then I'll plug you, Hulse! One, two——"

The little "ping!" that followed was not the automatic speaking but the release of the electric light switch as Carrados, unmarked among this climax, pressed it up. In the absolute blackness that followed Darragh spun round to face the direction of this new opponent.

"Shoot by all means, Mr. Darragh, if you are used to firing in the dark," said Carrados's imperturbable voice. "But in any case remember that I am. As I am a dead shot by sound, perhaps everyone had better remain exactly where he—or she, I regret to have to add, Miss Darragh—now is."

"You dog!" spat out Darragh.

"I should not even talk," advised the blind man. "I am listening for my friends, and I might easily mistake your motive among the hum of conversation."

He had not long to wait. In all innocence Phillips had opened the door to Parkinson, and immeasurably to his surprise two formidable-looking men of official type had followed in from somewhere. By a sort of instinct—or possibly a momentary ray of light had been their guide—they came direct to the locked door.

"Parkinson!" called Carrados.

"Yes, sir," replied that model attendant.

"We are all in here; Mr. Hulse and myself, and three—I am afraid that I can make no exception—three unfriendlies. At the moment the electric light is out of action, the key of the locked door has been mislaid, and firearms are being promiscuously flourished in the dark. That is the position. Now, if you have the key, Hulse——"

"I have," replied Hulse, grimly, "but for a fact I dropped it down my neck out of harm's way, and where the plague it's got to——"

As it happened the key was not required. The heavier of the officers outside, believing in the element of surprise, stood upon one foot and shot the other forward with the force and action of an engine piston-rod. The shattered door swung inward and the three men rushed into the room.

Darragh had made up his mind and, as the door crashed, he raised his hand to fire into the thick. But at that moment the light flashed on again and almost instantly was gone. Before his dazzled eyes and startled mind could adjust themselves to this he was borne down. When he rose again his hands were manacled.

"So," he breathed laboriously, bending a vindictive eye upon his outwitter. "When next we meet it will be my turn, I think."

"We shall never meet again," replied Carrados, impassively. "There is no other turn for you, Darragh."

"But where the blazes has Kuromi got to?" demanded Hulse, with sharp concern. "He can't have quit?"

One of the policemen walked to a table in the farthest corner of the room, looked down beyond it, and silently raised a beckoning hand. They joined him there.

The face of the man who would not survive dishonour still wore its habitual calm; his hand still grasped the fatal blade.

"Rum ways these foreigners have," remarked the other, disapprovingly. "Now who the Hanover would ever think of doing himself in like that?"

"I suppose," mused the blind man, as he waited for the official arrangements to go through, "that presently I shall have to live up to Hulse's overwhelming bewonderment. And yet if I pointed out to him that the buttonhole of the coat he is now wearing still has a stitch in it to keep it in shape and could not by any possibility—— Well, well, perhaps better not. It is a mistake for the conjurer to explain."

MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES

by

A. CONAN DOYLE

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME MISCELLANEOUS MEMORIES.

WHEN I returned from South Africa I found that my wife had improved in health during her stay at Naples, and we were able to settle down once more at Hindhead, where, what with work, cricket, and hunting, I had some pleasant years. A few pressing tasks were awaiting me, however. Besides the barren contest at Edinburgh I had done a history of the war, but the war still continued, and I had to modify it and keep it up to date in successive editions, until in 1902 it took final shape. I called it "The Great Boer War," not because I thought the war "great" in the scale of history, but to distinguish it from the smaller Boer War of 1881. It had the good fortune to please both friend and foe, for there was an article from one of the Boer leaders in *Cornhill* commending its impartial tone. It has been published now by Nelson in a cheap edition, and shows every sign of being the permanent record of the campaign. No less than twenty-seven thousand pounds was spent upon an Official History, but I cannot find that there was anything in it which I had not already chronicled, save for those minute details of various forces which clog a narrative. I asked the official historian whether my book had been of use to him, and he very handsomely answered that it had been the spine round which he built.

This history, which is a large-sized book, is not to be confused with the pamphlet, "The Cause and Conduct of the War in South Africa," which was a small, concise defence of the British position. The inception and result of this I have already described. I have no doubt that it was to the latter that my knighthood and my appointment as Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey, both of which occurred in 1902, were due.

I remember that on going down to Buckingham Palace to receive the accolade I found that all who were waiting for various honours were herded into funny little pens, according to their style and degree, there to await their turn. It chanced that Professor Oliver Lodge, who was knighted on the same morning, was penned with me, and we plunged at once into psychic talk, which made me forget where I was or what I was there for. Lodge was really more advanced and certain in his views than I was at that time, but I was quite sure about the truth of the phenomena, and only doubtful whether some alternative explanation might be found for a discarnate intelligence as the force at the back of them. This possibility I weighed for years before the evidence forced me to the Spiritist conclusion. But when, among the cloud of lies with which we are constantly girt, I read that Lodge and I were converted to our present views by the

Copyright, 1924, by A. Conan Doyle.

death of our respective sons, my mind goes back very clearly to that exchange of thought in 1902. At that time we had both studied the subject for many years.

"SIR NIGEL."

When my immediate preoccupations after the war had been got rid of I settled down to attempt some literary work upon a larger and more ambitious scale than those Sherlock Holmes or Brigadier Gerard stories, which had occupied so much of my time. The result was "Sir Nigel," in which I reverted to the spacious days of "The White Company" and used some of the same characters. "Sir Nigel" represents in my opinion my high-water mark in literature, and though that mark may be on sand, still an author knows its comparative position to the others. It received no particular recognition from critics or public. In England versatility is looked upon with distrust. You may write ballad tunes or you may write grand opera, but it cannot be admitted that the same man may be master of the whole musical range and do either with equal success.

In 1906 my wife passed away, after the long illness which she had borne with such exemplary patience. Her end was painless and serene. The long fight had ended at last in defeat, but at least we had held the vital fort for thirteen years after every expert had said that it was untenable.

On September 18th, 1907, I married Miss Jean Leckie, the younger daughter of a Blackheath family which I had known for years. There are some things which one feels too intimately to be able to express, and I can only say that sixteen years have passed without one shadow coming to mar even for a moment the sunshine of my Indian summer, which now deepens to a golden autumn. She and my three younger children, with the kindly sympathy of my two elder ones, have made my home an ideally happy one. From the depth of my experience I have only one word of counsel to all who join in a life partnership. Win each other's respect and all else may follow; lose respect, and real love and happiness become impossible.

My wife's people had a house at Crowborough, and there her mother had gone to reside. As they were devotedly attached, I thought it would be a happy arrangement not to separate them, so I bought a house close by, which I named "Windlesham." As I paid for it by a sum of money which I recovered after I had been unjustly defrauded of it, my friends suggested "Swindlesham" as a more appropriate name. Thus it came about that in 1907 I left Undershaw, Hindhead, after ten years' residence, and

Professor Oliver Lodge and I plunged at once into psychic talk, which made me forget where I was or what I was there for.

moved myself and my belongings to the highlands of Sussex, where I still dwell in the few months of settled life which give me a rest between my wanderings.

A VISIT TO CONSTANTINOPLE.

Years of peaceful work followed my marriage, broken only by two journeys to the Mediterranean, in the course of which we explored some out-of-the-way portions of Greece and visited Egypt, where I found hardly one single man left of all the good fellows whom I had once known. During our travels we visited Constantinople, looking at the great guns in the forts on the Dardanelles with little thought of all the British lives which were to be sacrificed upon those low, dark, heather-clad hills which slope down to the northern shore. In Constantinople we attended the weekly selamlik of Abdul Hamid, and saw him with his dyed beard and the ladies of his harem as they passed down to their devotions. It was an incredible sight to Western eyes to see the crowd of officers and officials, many of them fat and short of wind, who ran behind his carriage in the hope that they might catch the Imperial eye.

It was Ramadan, and the old Sultan sent me a message that he had read my books and that he would gladly have seen me had it not been the holy month. He interviewed me through his Chamberlain and presented me with the Order of the Medjedieh, and, what was more pleasing to me, he gave the Order of the Chevekat to my wife. As this is the Order of Compassion, and as my wife ever since she set foot in Constantinople had been endeavouring to feed the horde of starving dogs who roamed the streets, no gift could have been more appropriate.

We were admitted secretly and by very special favour into the great Mosque of Sophia upon the sacred festival which is known as the Night of Power. It was a most marvellous spectacle as from the upper circle of pillared arches we looked down upon sixty thousand lighted lamps and twelve thousand worshippers, who made, as they rose and fell in their devotions, a sound like the wash of the sea. The priests in their high pulpits were screaming like seagulls and fanaticism was in the air. It was at this moment that I saw a woman —I will not call her a lady—young and flighty, seat herself jauntily on the edge

Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle with their children.

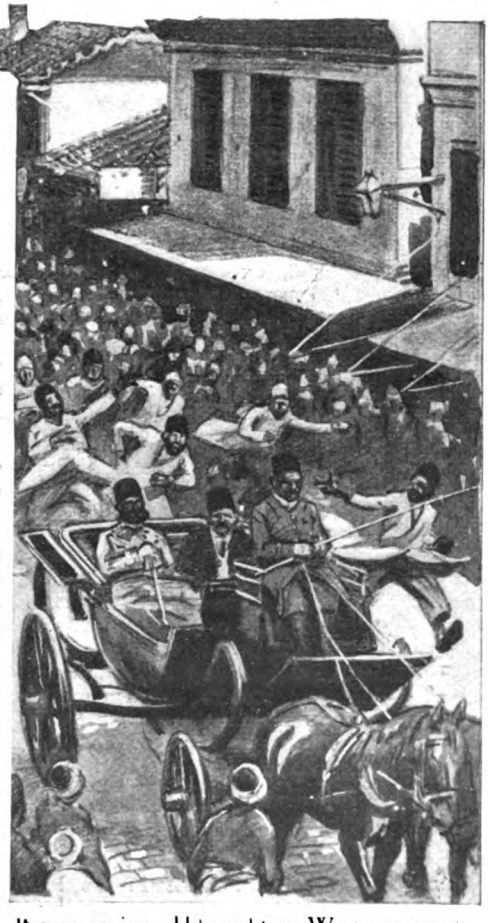
of the stone parapet, and look down at the twelve thousand men who were facing us. No unbeliever should be tolerated there, and a woman was the abomination of abominations. I heard a low, deep growl, and saw fierce bearded faces looking up. It only needed one fiery spirit to head the rush and we should have been massacred—with the poor consolation that some of us at least had really asked for it. However, she was pulled down and we made our way as quickly and as quietly as possible out of a side door. It was time, I think.

One curious incident of that journey stands out in my memory. We were steaming past Ægina on a lovely day with calm water around us. The captain, a courteous Italian, had allowed us to go upon the bridge, and we, my wife and I, were looking down into the transparent depths when we both clearly saw a creature which has never, so far as I know, been described by Science. It was exactly like a young ichthyosaurus, about four feet long, with thin neck and tail and four marked side flippers. The ship had passed it before we could call any other observer. I was interested to notice that Admiral Anstruther, in *The Evening News* some years later, described, and drew, an exactly similar creature which he had seen under water off the Irish coast. This old world has got some surprises for us yet.

DORANDO'S GREAT MARATHON RACE.

Here and there as I look back at those long and happy years some particular episode flashes vividly into my memory. I do not often do journalistic work—why should one poach upon the preserves of others ?—but on the occasion of the Olympic Games of 1908 I was tempted, chiefly by the offer of an excellent seat, to do the Marathon Race for *The Daily Mail*. It was certainly a wonderful experience, for it will be known to history as the Dorando Race. Perhaps a few short paragraphs from my description may even now recapture the thrill of it. The huge crowd, some fifty thousand people, were all watching the entrance to the Stadium, the dark gap through which the leader must appear. Then :—

"At last he came. But how different from the exultant victor whom we expected ! Out of the dark archway there staggered a little man, with red running-drawers, a tiny, boy-like creature. He reeled as he entered



It was an incredible sight to Western eyes to see the crowd of officers and officials who ran behind the Sultan's carriage in the hope that they might catch the Imperial eye.

and faced the roar of the applause. Then he feebly turned to the left and wearily trotted round the track. Friends and encouragers were pressing round him.

"Suddenly the whole group stopped. There were wild gesticulations. Men stooped and rose again. Good heavens, he has fainted; is it possible that even at this last moment the prize may slip through his fingers? Every eye slides round to that dark archway. No second man has yet appeared. Then a great sigh of relief goes up. I do not think in all that great assembly any man would have wished victory to be torn at the last instant from this plucky little Italian. He has won it. He should have it.

"Thank God, he is on his feet again—the little red legs going incoherently, but drumming hard, driven by a supreme will within. There is a groan as he falls once more, and a cheer as he staggers again to his feet. It is horrible, and yet fascinating, this struggle between a set purpose and an utterly exhausted frame. Again, for a hundred yards, he ran in the same furious and yet uncertain gait. Then again he collapsed, kind hands saving him from a heavy fall.

"He was within a few yards of my seat. Amid stooping figures and grasping hands I caught a glimpse of the haggard, yellow face, the glazed, expressionless eyes, the lank black hair streaked across the brow. Surely he is done now. He cannot rise again.

"From under the archway has darted the second runner, Hayes, Stars and Stripes on his breast, going gallantly, well within his strength. There is only twenty yards to do, if the Italian can do it. He staggered up, no trace of intelligence upon his set face, and again the red legs broke into their strange automatic amble.

"Will he fall again? No; he sways, he balances, and then he is through the tape and into a score of friendly arms. He has gone to the extreme of human endurance. No Roman of the prime ever bore himself better than Dorando of the Olympic of 1908. The great breed is not yet extinct."

Of course, the prize went to the American, as his rival had been helped, but the sympathy of the crowd, and I am sure of every sporting American present, went out to the little Italian. I not only wrote Dorando up, but I started a subscription for him in *The Daily Mail* which realized over three hundred pounds—a fortune in his Italian village—so that he was able to start a baker's shop, which he could not have done on an Olympic medal. My wife made the presentation in English which he could not understand, he answered in Italian which we could not understand, but I think we really did understand each other all the same.

There is no denying that the American team were very unpopular in London, though the unpopularity was not national, for the Stadium was thick with American flags. Everyone admitted that they were a splendid lot of athletes, but they were not wisely handled, and I saw with my own eyes that they did things which would not have been tolerated if done by an English team in New York. However, there may well have been some want of tact on both sides, and causes at work of which the public knew nothing. When I consider the Dunraven yacht race, and then these Olympic Games, I am by no means assured that sport has that international effect for good which some people have claimed for it. I wonder whether any of the old Grecian wars had their real origin in the awards at Olympia? I may add that we had a dozen or so of the American boys down to "Windlesham," where we all had a very enjoyable day together. I found them all excellent fellows. I put up a billiard Olympic prize, and one of them bore it off with him. The whole incident was very pleasant.

DRAMATIZING "RODNEY STONE."

My work for a few years after my marriage ran largely in the direction of drama, and if it was not lucrative it at least provided us with a good deal of amusement and excitement. In the case of one venture this excitement became a little too poignant, though all was well in the end. I had dramatized "Rodney Stone" under the name of "The House of Temperley," with all the ring scenes and prize fights included, and treated in the most realistic fashion. We had an excellent boxing instructor, who took one of the smaller parts, and who not only fought himself but trained the others to a remarkable degree of skill. So realistic was it that when on the first night the bully Berks, after a long encounter, went down with a crash from a fine raking upper-cut there was a groan from the whole house, which meant as clearly as could be, "There now, you have killed a man for our amusement." It was really incredibly well done, and I could never have believed that such scenes could be so cleverly faked, though it was not always done with impunity, for Rex Davies, who played Gloucester Dick, assured me that he lost a tooth and broke both a finger and a rib during his engagement. The play itself was unequal, but was so very novel and sensational in its best scenes that it should have been a considerable success. I found no manager who would take the

risk, and I had myself to take the Adelphi Theatre for a six months' lease, at a rent which with the company worked out at about six hundred pounds a week. As on the top of this the production cost about two thousand pounds, it will be seen that I was plunging rather deep.

And luck did not favour us. The furore for boxing had not yet set in. Ladies were afraid to come and imagined it would be a brutal spectacle. Those who did come were exhilarated beyond measure, but the prejudice still weighed heavily against us. Then there came one of those theatrical slumps when everything goes wrong, and, finally, King Edward died, and that killed it outright. It was a very serious situation. I still had the theatre upon my hands. I might sublet it or I might not. If I did not the expense was simply ruinous. I therefore determined to play a bold and energetic game, and certainly I never played a bolder. Seeing the course that things were taking, I shut myself up and devoted my whole mind to making a sensational Sherlock Holmes drama. I wrote it in a week and called it " The Speckled Band," after the short story of that name. It achieved a considerable success, as I have related in an earlier chapter dealing with Sherlock Holmes's appearances on the stage.

OTHER DRAMATIC ADVENTURES.

Yet another theatrical venture was my " Fires of Fate," some of which is certainly the best dramatic work that I have ever done. It was unlucky, as it was produced in a very hot summer. I carried it at my own expense through the two impossible holiday months, but when Lewis Waller, who played the hero, returned from a provincial tour to London, he was keen on some new play and my " Fires " were never really burned out. I fancy sometimes that they might even now flame up again if given a chance. I stage-managed most of this play myself, and with curious results. There are certain dramatic conventionalities which can only be broken through by one who is not himself an actor. There was a scene in which a number of helpless tourists, men and women, were brutally ill-treated by Arabs. The brutality in rehearsal was conventional. I made the Arabs get imitation whips and cudgels and really savage the poor travellers. The effect was novel and appalling. There was a young Welsh officer in the front of the stalls who was a friend of my brother's. He held both the V.C. and the D.S.O. So stirred was he by the sight that he could hardly be restrained from clambering on to the stage in order to help the unhappy tourists. The end of that act, when the drove of bleeding captives were led away and you heard the monotonous song of the Arabs as they marched, and saw Lewis Waller, who had been left for dead, struggle up on to his elbow and signal across the Nile for assistance, was one which brought the whole house to its feet. Such moments to a dramatist give a thrill of personal satisfaction such as the most successful novelist never can feel. There is no more subtle pleasure, if you are really satisfied with your work, than to sit in the shadow of a box and watch, not the play, but the audience.

I had one other dramatic venture, " Brigadier Gerard," which also was mildly successful. In fact, I have never known failure on the stage save in the case of the unfortunate " Jane Annie." Lewis Waller played the Brigadier, and a splendid dashing Hussar he made. It was a glorious performance. I remember that in this play also I ran up against the conventionalities of the stage. I had a group of Hussar officers, the remnants of the regiment which had gone through Napoleon's last campaign. When it came to the dress rehearsal, I found them, to my horror, dressed up in brand-new uniforms of chestnut and silver.

" Good heavens ! " I cried. " This is not a comic opera ! "

" What do you want done ? " asked Waller.

" Why," said I, " these men are warriors, not ballet-dancers. They have been out in all weathers day and night for months. Every scrap of truth goes out of the play if they appear like that."

The uniforms had cost over a hundred pounds, but I covered them with mud and dust and tore holes in them. The result was that, with begrimed faces, I got a band of real Napoleonic soldiers. Lewis Waller himself insisted on retaining his grease-paint and his nice new clothes, but I am sure every man in the audience, if not every woman, would have liked him better as I had made the others. Poor Waller ! There was some strange and wonderful blood in his veins. I have heard that it was Basque. He was a glorious fellow, and his premature death a great blow to our stage. What virility ! What a face and figure ! They called him the " Flappers' idol," and it reflects credit on the flapper, for where could she find a less sickly and more manly type ? He caught his fatal illness in serving the soldiers. One of his greatest possessions was his voice. He came down to " Windlesham " once, and as he was reciting in the music-room that wonderful resonant voice chanced to catch the exact note which corresponded to the curve of all the glass lampshades on the walls. They all started thrilling as

At the dress rehearsal I found a group of officers who had gone through Napoleon's last campaign, dressed up in brand-new uniforms. "Good heavens!" I cried to Lewis Waller. "This is not a comic opera!"

a wine-glass does when it is touched. I could quite believe, after that, that matter could be disintegrated by sound if the sound were strong enough.

A THAMES EMBANKMENT EPISODE.

I remember one curious episode about that time. I was staying in a Northumberland Avenue hotel, and I walked out at night in pensive mood, strolling down the Embankment and watching the great dark river with the gleam of the lights upon it. Suddenly a man passed me, walking very rapidly and muttering in an incoherent way. He gave me an impression of desperation, and I quickened my pace and followed him. With a rush he sprang up on the parapet and seemed to be about to throw himself into the river. I was just in time to catch his knees and to pull him down. He struggled hard to get up, but I put my arm through his and led him across the road. There I reasoned with him and examined into the cause of his troubles. He had had some domestic quarrel, I believe, but his main worry was his business, which was that of a baker. He seemed a respectable man and the case seemed genuine, so I calmed him down, gave him such immediate help as I could, and made him promise to return home and to keep in touch with me afterwards.

When the excitement of the incident was over I had grave doubts as to whether I had not been the victim of a clever swindler. I was considerably relieved, therefore, to get a letter a few days later, giving name and address, and obviously genuine. I lost sight of the case after that.

A REMEMBRANCE OF THE WAR YEARS.

I can never forget, and our descendants can never imagine, the strange effect upon the mind which was produced by seeing the whole European fabric drifting to the edge of the chasm with absolute uncertainty as to what would happen when it toppled over. Military surprises, starvation, revolution, bankruptcy—no one knew what so unprecedented an episode would produce. It

was all so evidently preventable, and yet it was so madly impossible to prevent it, for the Prussians had stuck their monkey-wrench into the machinery and it would no longer work. As a rule one has wild dreams and wakes to sanity, but on those mornings I left sanity when I woke and found myself in a world of nightmare dreams.

On August 4th, 1914, when war seemed assured, I had a note from Mr. Goldsmith, a plumber in the village: "There is a feeling in Crowborough that something should be done." This made me laugh at first, but presently I thought more seriously of it. After all Crowborough was one of a thousand villages, and we might be planning and acting for all. Therefore I had notices rapidly printed. I distributed them and put them at road corners, and the same evening (August 4th) we held a village meeting and established the Volunteers, a force which soon grew to two hundred thousand men.

THE CIVILIAN RESERVE.

The old Volunteers had become extinct when the Territorials had been started some ten or twelve years before. But this new force which I conceived was to be a universal one, where every citizen, young and old, should be trained to arms—a great stockpot into which the nation could dip and draw its needs. We named ourselves the Civilian Reserve. No one, I reflected, could be the worse in such days for being able to drill and to shoot, or for being assembled in organized units. Government was too preoccupied to do anything, and we must show initiative for ourselves. After I had propounded my scheme I signed the roll myself and one hundred and twenty men did the same. Those were the first men in the Volunteer force. Next evening we assembled at the drill hall, found out who could drill us, chose our non-commissioned officers, and set to work to form ourselves into an efficient company. Gillette, my American actor friend, had got stranded in England, and he was an interested spectator on this occasion. For the time being I took command.

I had notified the War Office what we had done, and asked for official sanction. We were careful not to stand in the way of recruiting, and determined to admit none who could reasonably join up at once. When the plan began to work I wrote a description of our methods to *The Times*. As a consequence I received requests for our rules and methods from twelve hundred towns and villages. My secretary and I worked all day getting these off, and in many cases the inquiries led to the formation of similar companies.

For about a fortnight all went well. We drilled every day, though we had no weapons. At the end of that time there came a peremptory order from the War Office: "All unauthorized bodies to be at once disbanded." Unquestioning and cheerful obedience is the first law in time of war. The company was on parade. I read out the telegram and then said, "Right turn! Dismiss!" With this laconic order the Civilian Reserve dissolved for ever.

But it had a speedy and glorious resurrection. There was a central body in London with some remote connection with the old Volunteer force. Lord Desborough was chairman of this, and there could not have been a better man. The Government put the formation of a Volunteer force into the charge of this committee, to which I was elected. Mr. Percy Harris was the secretary, and showed great energy. I wrote to all the twelve hundred applicants referring them to this new centre, and we, the Crowborough body, now became the Crowborough Company of the Fifth Royal Sussex Volunteer Regiment. That we were the first company in the country was shown by *The Volunteer Gazette*, when a prize was awarded for this distinction. Under its new shape Captain St. Quintin, who had been a soldier, became our leader, and Mr. Gresson and Druce, both of them famous cricketers, our lieutenants. Goldsmith was one of the sergeants, and I remained a full private for four years of war, and an extra half-year before we were demobilized. Our ranks fluctuated, for as the age limit of service gradually rose we passed many men into the Regular Army; but we filled up with new recruits, and we were always about a hundred strong. Our drill and discipline were excellent, and when we received our rifles and bayonets we soon learned to use them; nor were our marching powers contemptible when one remembers that many of the men were in the fifties and even in the sixties. It was quite usual for us to march from Crowborough to Frant with our rifles and equipment, to drill for a long hour in a heavy marshy field, and then to march back, singing all the way. It would be a good fourteen miles, apart from the drill.

SERVING IN THE RANKS.

I have very pleasant recollections of that long period of service. I learned to know my neighbours who stood in the same rank, and I hope that they also learned to know me as they could not otherwise. We had frequent camps, field days, and inspections. On one occasion eight thousand of us were assembled, and I am bound to say that I have never seen a finer body of men, though

they were rather of the police-constable than of the purely military type. The spirit was excellent, and I am sure that if we had had our chance we should have done well in action. But it was hard to know how to get the chance save in case of invasion. We were the remaining pivots of national life and could only be spared for short periods, or chaos would follow. But a week or two in case of invasion was well within our powers, and such a chance would have been eagerly hailed. No doubt our presence enabled the Government to strip the country of regular troops far more than they would have dared otherwise to do. Twice, as Repington's Memoirs show, there was a question of embodying us for active service, but in each case the emergency passed.

I found the life of a private soldier a delightful one. To be led and not to lead was most restful, and so long as one's thoughts were bounded by the polishing of one's buttons and buckles, or the cleansing of one's rifle, one was quietly happy. In that long period I shared every phase of my companions' life. I have stood in the queue with my pannikin to get a welcome drink of beer, and I have slept in a bell-tent upon a summer night with a Sussex yokel blissfully snoring upon each of my shoulders. Sometimes amusing situations arose. I remember a new adjutant arriving and reviewing us. When he got opposite to me in his inspection his eyes were caught by my South African medal.

When he got opposite to me his eyes were caught by my South African medal.
"You have seen service, my man?" said he.
"Yes, sir," I answered.
"Good man!" said he.

"You have seen service, my man?" said he.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Good man!" said he.

He was a little cocky fellow who might well have been my son so far as age went. When he had passed down the line he said to our C.O., St. Quintin: "Who is that big fellow on the right of the rear rank?" "That's Sherlock Holmes," said the C.O. "Good Lord!" said the adjutant. "I hope he does not mind my 'My manning' him!" "He just loves it," said St. Quintin, which showed that he knew me.

THE PARNASSUS PRIZE

by

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT, R.I.

THE men and women who devote their lives to the pursuit of the Muses will, should you be kind enough to ask them, give quite a number of reasons for the choice of this career. "I had to express myself," says A. "It was in me, and it had to come out," says B., thereby suggesting an unpleasant comparison between his poetry and an inflamed appendix. "It was the only way in which I could give my message," says C., hoping that you will be fool enough to ask him what his message is. "I cannot remember the time," adds D. (who has also, it would seem, forgotten how he once bit his nursery-governess), "when I did not long to write." Thus they go on right through the alphabet, even unto Z.—who became a novelist, so he says, through his wish to help mankind—one and all taking this lofty moral stand; one and all denying the faintest possibility that they could have been actuated by the mercenary motives which cause a broker to broke, a butcher to butch, or a plumber to plumb.

And yet, if they were only honest, nine out of every ten of these Muse-hunters would have the same simple confession to make. A moment had come in their lives when it was clear that they could no longer continue to live on the charity of their parents, and looking around for a profession which should bring the largest rewards for the least possible expenditure of work, they had naturally decided to become authors. A proportion, to be estimated at a fraction of one per cent., had thereupon gone straight ahead and become very nearly as wealthy as they had hoped; while by the time that the remainder had discovered that even writing implies a certain amount of labour, it was too late for them to turn back. Little as they knew of their own calling, they knew still less of any other; with increasing age the notion of regular work in an office had grown more and more repulsive; and finally they have either made good on a humble and modified scale, or else have lapsed into complete idleness, for which (since are they not still "literary"?) they have neither explanation nor apology to offer.

What a pleasure it is to turn from this dismal and depressing prospect to the case of Reginald Gooch. Mr. Gooch had never talked any nonsense about his mission or his message; the word "uplift" was for him merely a signal to expose his regular teeth in a genial and contemptuous smile. He had never heard of Tchekov—no, not under so much as one of his forty alternative spellings; he firmly believed that people wrote blank verse because they were too lazy to think of the rhymes, and that they came into collision with the censor of plays either because they were low-minded or because they wanted a free advertisement. The second attitude he could appreciate, but with the first he had no sympathy whatsoever.

For health and heartiness radiated from Reginald. Every morning he flung off his one blanket at seven o'clock, plunged into a cold bath (breaking the ice when necessary), dried himself with a rough towel, did twenty minutes' vigorous calisthenics, and clothed himself in the garments of the ordinary business man. After a gigantic breakfast—for he was no crank—he would march off to the station, exhibit his season-ticket at the barrier, and take his seat in a smoking compartment on the eight-twenty-

Copyright, 1924, by Denis Mackail.

five train. During the journey to the City he read a popular morning newspaper and smoked a large bulldog pipe. At nine o'clock sharp he entered the marble hall of the Mutual Building, nodded to the door-keeper, stepped into the elevator, and was whizzed up to the ninth floor.

Letting himself into his business premises with a latchkey, he exchanged his jacket for the one which hung in the corner cupboard, removed the cover of his typewriter, glanced for the last time at his watch, and set to work. For eight solid hours the rattle of his machine echoed against the bare walls of his room—interrupted only for the light lunch which was sent in to him on a tray—and at five o'clock he replaced the typewriter-cover, changed his jacket again, locked his door, and dropped a pile of long envelopes down the mail-chute. There followed a brisk walk to his large and far from exclusive club, a game of cards or squash-rackets with his friends, a simple but generous dinner—with the evening paper propped against the toast-rack—and at nine-forty he caught the fast train back to his suburban home. Twice a week—on Saturday and Sunday afternoons—he played a round of golf. Sometimes he won and sometimes he lost, but in either event he exposed his regular teeth in a genial and sportsmanlike smile. "A jolly good match," he would say; and his adversary, even when vanquished, could not help but smile back at him.

SUCH, in brief outline, was Reginald Gooch, the successful author. And if you proceed still further and ask what he wrote, the answer is plain and all-embracing. He wrote whatever he was paid to write. Novels, essays, children's stories, plays, advertisements, magazine articles, light verse, serials, rippling rhymes, film scenarios, political tracts (on all sides), short stories, straight talks to men, straight talks to women, straight talks to Bible-students and Boy Scouts—these, and other varieties of literature which there is hardly space to describe, poured in an unceasing stream from his typewriter on the ninth floor of the Mutual Building. He had only one rule as to what he would *not* write; and that was that he would on no account set finger to keyboard except to fill a definite order.

None of those long envelopes which we saw slithering down the mail-chute would ever have its contents returned. The editors and others who had commissioned them might print these contents or not as they chose; but since they had to pay for them in either case, their decision made little difference to Mr. Gooch. He was far from conceited, but he was under no illusion as to his value. His stuff was always as good as the next man's, but its chief merit had little to do with its quality. It lay rather in the fact that he invariably delivered his MS. on the very day which the buyer had specified, and that it was invariably exactly what the buyer had asked for. If Reginald were told to provide a story of six thousand words on a strong subject, there was no need for anybody to question either its length or its strength. It could go off to the printers at once, with the assurance in everyone's mind that it would require neither cutting nor expansion, neither toning down nor gingering up. Whatever Reginald delivered would be the goods.

This is, we are sometimes told, the age of commerce, and it is clear enough what an advantage Mr. Gooch possessed over his more temperamental rivals. Where another's work would soar into the heights on one occasion and plunge into the depths on the next, there was no such variation with Reginald. And since publishers and editors are busy men, you can imagine their pleasure and satisfaction in knowing how absolutely unnecessary it was for them ever to read anything that he wrote. They had only to say what they wanted, and they could be as certain of getting it as that the morrow's sun would rise. They blessed the name of Reginald Gooch; they signed cheques for him with alacrity. If only, they said, there were others like him, they would not have a care in the world.

Among the other commissions which came in Reginald's way there not infrequently arose the request to supply what are known as lyrics for musical plays. And in case you are unaware of the peculiarities of this form of composition, it may be as well to make room for a little explanatory matter.

Many playgoers believe, in their innocence, that the lyrics of a musical play are written before the music; that the composer adjusts his melodies to certain poems which are already in existence. But this is not the case. The truth is that the tunes are approved first and that the lyric-writer is only called in quite at the end. You detect a difficulty here, and with your usual acumen place your finger on it at once. What, you ask, does the lyric-writer do if he is ignorant of music? How can he turn off those sparkling verses with no other guide than a series of unintelligible crotchets and semi-breves on a sheet of ruled paper? Alternatively, how can he think out his words if he has to stop continually to ask someone else to play him that bit over again on the piano?

The answer is forthcoming at once. Necessity being the mother of invention, the poet—having had the required air

hummed to him by the composer—commits to paper what is technically known as a "dummy" lyric; a meaningless string of words whose rhythm will fit the tune. He then goes home and, using this dummy as a guide, substitutes new words which will contain a conventional minimum of both sense and rhyme. In the good old days there was very little difference between the result of such work and any other kind of bad poem. A regular *tumti-tum* was kept up from beginning to end, and the finished lyric might often have been mistaken for a weak stanza from Longfellow or Tennyson.

But now—ah, now it is different. You won't cram the "May Queen" or the "Schooner *Hesperus*" into the kind of music that is written to-day. By the time that the modern composer has lifted a passage from the Fifth Symphony, added some West African improvements, twisted in a bit of blues, and shaken the mixture well together, there isn't much left of the dear old regular *tumti-tum*. The first line of the accompanying lyric will now contain seventeen feet, the second two, the third will be a hiatus representing a noise on the trap-drum, and the fourth will be marked "Patter" and contain so many syllables that it would be hardly worth estimating them.

As illustration let us take these dummy lines which Mr. Gooch, sitting attentively by the side of Mr. Otto Klinck's piano, noted down as assistance for his subsequent labours at the Mutual Building. They ran as follows:—

"Johnny get your gun the cat's in the cupboard oh yes
I guess
What a mess.
Where are you going to? Pom-pom. Wow.
But when
He got to the hen
Should auld acquaintance be forgot, should auld acquaintance be forgot,
The moon jumped over the cow."

Novels, essays, children's stories, plays, poured in an unceasing stream from his typewriter.

You might find it hard to believe that on the bones of this unpromising skeleton Reginald Gooch built up a lyric which not only fitted Mr. Klinck's music like a glove, but also aroused the wildest enthusiasm at every performance of "The Banana Girl," where it struck the audience as the last word in exquisite sentiment.

And now, with general apologies for the length of this introduction, let us at once pass to the Saturday afternoon when Reginald Gooch first met Cassandra Wilkinson.

He had, as usual, been playing golf, and on this particular occasion with a gentleman to whom—in the absence through influenza of his prearranged opponent—he had been introduced by the secretary. The sun shone brightly,

the birds sang gaily; both players hit their balls with the correct portions of their clubs, and after a ding-dong struggle of narrow margins and halved holes they trickled on to the eighteenth green all square and like as they lay. Reginald crouched on the ground, rose again to his full height, and with a firm tap of the putter laid his ball dead.

His adversary took a deep breath, swung his club loosely to and fro, and then, with a smart click, sent his ball careering over the green. It ran within an inch of the hole, but fetched up more than a yard on the farther side.

"I play again," he announced. The tense silence was broken by his ball dropping into the tin.

"I give it you," he added, magnanimously. "Halved."

"Oh, no," said Reginald, with true sportsmanship. "I often miss these short ones. Just let me——"

He broke off as a young woman, descending from the porch of the club-house, invaded the green. Reginald looked at her and she returned his gaze. Then he looked inquiringly at his opponent.

"My sister," said that gentleman. "Let me introduce you. Cassandra, this is Mr. Gooch."

Reginald bowed, and a deep flush stole up the back of his neck. Miss Wilkinson extended a friendly hand, and he was on the point of advancing to meet it when her brother stopped him.

"Just a moment," he said. "There are some fellows yelling at us from the tee. Better put your ball down first."

"Oh, yes," said Reginald, gathering his wits together. He grasped his putter, gave the ball a gentle push—and missed the hole completely. But he didn't care. Already he had dashed across the green, and was assuring Miss Wilkinson—with the utmost inaccuracy—that her presence had had nothing whatever to do with his failure.

"It was a jolly good match," he declared, exposing his regular teeth in an idiotic smile. Then he suddenly realized that he was still holding Cassandra's hand, and snatched his own away.

But Miss Wilkinson, who had immediately taken to his look of almost offensive health, seemed to have noticed nothing else.

"Why don't you come back and have some tea with us?" she asked.

"It would give me more pleasure than I can well describe," said Reginald. "I——"

And then, perhaps fortunately, the angry noises from the next players drove the whole party off the green. In a dream Reginald put his clubs away in someone else's locker, washed his hands, and hurried out to the two-seater where Miss Wilkinson was waiting. He would modestly have taken his place in the dickey, but she insisted on his sharing the front seat. And though he was at first a little annoyed that her brother should take his place there too, yet since this resulted in his being pressed so closely against Cassandra that he could scarcely breathe, his annoyance soon passed.

THEY drove to the Gables, and Reginald stayed until he was all but kicked out by Mr. Wilkinson senior. Notwithstanding this, his last words to Cassandra were to inquire whether she would be at home on the following afternoon.

And—oh, joy—she had said "yes."

The ardent Reginald interpreted this intelligence as justifying him in setting in on the Sunday almost immediately after lunch. And in these circumstances it was perhaps unfair of him to resent, as he did, the presence in the family party of a long-haired and sickly-looking man who was introduced as Mr. Hilary Moulton. In the ordinary way Reginald was broad-minded enough to admit that the length of a fellow's hair and the state of his complexion were pretty much that fellow's own affair; but he did *not* like the frequency with which this Mr. Moulton employed Miss Wilkinson's Christian name. It struck him as totally unnecessary, and in the worst possible taste.

Later in the afternoon, though, he invited Miss Wilkinson to accompany him to the bottom of the garden, and—again oh, joy—she consented. It may be said at once that he wasted no time—no, not even a second—when he got her there.

"Forgive me if I appear to startle you," he said, "but I have something of the utmost importance to say to you. Do you believe in love at first sight?"

"'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'" quoted Cassandra, provocatively.

"Eh?" said Reginald, who failed to detect the inverted commas.

"Shakespeare," said Cassandra. "Or, at least," she corrected herself, "I believe he took the line from Marlowe."

"Did he?" said the simple-hearted Reginald. "I never knew he'd been there." And again he pulled himself together and rushed on. "I have not had a moment's peace since I saw you yesterday," he said. "I have not slept all night—which, in my case, is quite without precedent. Believe me or not, Miss Wilkinson, but I worship the very ground you walk on, and—I may add in passing—the very air that you breathe. Unless you will consent to put me out of my misery——" and here he

exposed his regular teeth in a winning smile—" I dread to think of the consequences. Cassandra—dearest—will you be—that is to say, what about it ? "

Miss Wilkinson's long eyelashes fluttered over her peach-like cheek.

" Oh ! " she murmured. And Reginald snatched at her hand.

" I adore you ! " he breathed, hoarsely.

Miss Wilkinson seized her hand away.

" I cannot listen to you," she said.

" What ! " exclaimed Reginald. " Am I too late, then ? Have I but gazed into the cup of rapture to have it dashed from my lip ? "

" Not exactly," said Miss Wilkinson. " But — well, you saw that Mr. Moulton just now ? "

" Yes," said Reginald, grinding his teeth.

" The fact is," she went on, " that he proposed to me after church this morning, and——"

" Curse him ! " said Reginald, passionately.

" No, no," cried Miss Wilkinson. " I wouldn't give him an answer. I told him to wait. But —but you see the position, don't you ? " she finished, rather lamely.

Reginald saw nothing but that his adored one was still technically in the market, and he said so.

" Why don't you come back and have some tea with us ? " she asked.

"But I have known you such a short time," she protested. "I know so little about you."

"I will tell you anything and everything that you ask," replied Reginald, eagerly. "My past is an open book."

"That may be," said Cassandra. "But I don't even know what you do."

"Do?" said Reginald. "Why, I write, of course." He may have been a little surprised that she had never heard of him, but the enthusiasm with which she greeted the information more than made up for this.

"Oh!" she said, excitedly. "*Do* tell me what you write!"

"Well," said Reginald, with a touch of self-consciousness, "I wrote 'Hearts Across the Sea' and 'The Mysterious Mr. Ming' and the book and lyrics of 'The Banana Girl' and 'How to Become an Archbishop' and 'Wee Women' and 'Hands Off the People's Food' and all the comedy scenes in 'Put It There!' and——"

"Stop!" said Miss Wilkinson, covering her ears with her hands. "You cannot call that writing."

"Why not?" asked Reginald. And then, as she still didn't answer: "What else do you call it?"

"Mr. Moulton," said Cassandra, ominously, "writes the most beautiful poems."

"Well," said Reginald, readily enough, "I bet he doesn't make even a hundredth part as much——"

"*Oh!*" groaned Miss Wilkinson.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Reginald.

"How *can* you say that? How *can* you pretend that mere commercial success can be compared with the creation of living, burning, and pulsating works of art?"

"Oh, art!" said Reginald, contemptuously. And then, as a cold look came into Cassandra Wilkinson's face, he tried to retrieve his mistake. "What I mean to say is," he explained, "that Moulton may write much cleverer stuff than mine, but—other things being equal—surely the fellow with the steady income is——"

"Hilary has means of his own," interrupted Miss Wilkinson. "But even if he hadn't, I am sure nothing would induce him to lower his standard of writing—just so as to make money."

It struck Reginald that, if that were the case, Mr. Moulton must be even a sillier sort of ass than he had thought. But he kept this opinion to himself.

"Dash it," he muttered, "I bet my poems are just as good as Moulton's—even if they *have* been paid for," he added, maliciously.

But Cassandra never heard the end of his observation.

"Your poems!" she cried, her whole face lighting up. "But I never—I mean, you didn't——"

"Of course I write poems," said Reginald. "Jolly good ones, too," he added, with unwonted conceit.

"But what—where?"

"Well," said Reginald, "quite apart from the lyrics in 'The Banana Girl' and at least a dozen other music shows, I do all the verse for *Aunt Gertie's Annual* and——"

But the look of disillusionment and distress on Miss Wilkinson's face brought him up short.

"Why, what's wrong?" he asked.

"Everything," said Cassandra, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, Mr. Gooch, why—*why* must you fritter away your gifts like that? How can you expect me to throw in my lot with one who——"

But Reginald, who had taken a sudden resolution, didn't wait for her to finish.

"All right," he broke in. "Since you wish it, I will do as you say. To-morrow I shall turn my attention to highbrow—I should say, to serious verse, and if I can't run rings round Hilary Moulton, or anyone else for that matter, inside of six weeks, then I'll jolly well eat my hat! But," he added, raising his voice as she would have spoken, "you've got to understand this. If I can beat Moulton at his own game, then I shall expect you to marry me. Is that perfectly clear?"

Once again Miss Wilkinson's eyes shone.

"Listen to me," she said. "Hilary is sending in a poem for the Parnassus Prize. If he wins it, then I have promised him that our engagement shall be announced. But if you——"

"Have no fear," said Reginald, exposing his regular teeth in a self-confident smile. "Only tell me where to address my entry, and that prize is as good as mine. All I ask is a fair field and no favour, and if I don't knock young Moulton into a cocked hat then you can call me what you jolly well like. Is it a bargain?"

"It is," said Miss Wilkinson in a low voice. And then, withdrawing from his attempt to seize and embrace her hand, she turned and ran lightly up the garden towards the house.

Notwithstanding his excited determination to wipe the floor with Hilary Moulton and all comers in the matter of the Parnassus Prize, Reginald Gooch let nothing interfere with his ordinary work until the clock had struck five on the following day. But then, instead of leaving the Mutual Building for his club, he cut the string of the large parcel which had been waiting since lunch-time on the corner of his desk and set himself to examine the contents.

The printed rules governing this distinguished competition seemed simple enough. As long as the poem was in the English language, there appeared to be no limitation either as to its length or subject. So far, in fact, so good. But when Mr. Gooch turned to the successful entries for the previous years, and compared them with the "Golden Treasury," which he had also taken from the parcel, his mouth closed over his regular teeth in a look which can only be described as one of bewilderment.

"But these aren't poems at all," he said aloud. He could, indeed, quite understand it that they were totally devoid of meaning—for that he took to be one of the principal requirements in serious verse. But he could hardly find any rhymes, and he was quite unable to discover any metre.

"This is dashed queer," he said. And the more he looked at the "Golden Treasury" the queerer it became. There was a poem there, called "The Soldier's Dream," which he might easily, he felt, have written himself. It tripped along like "The Fireman's Wedding," and every word in it was clear as crystal. What had happened to English poetry, then, that the Adjudication Committee of the Parnassus Prize had selected this appalling drivel? Was it because they couldn't find anything better, or because they really preferred it?

Again he studied "The Soldier's Dream," and again he compared it with "Foreshadowings"—last year's prize poem.

"The turgid rubric of the glistering year,
Too near—
What, immemorial? Comes again so swift
The timid ichthyosaurus down Fifth
Avenue—"

Good Lord! Why, the fellow who wrote that must be off his nut!

"The timid ichthyc——" Pah!

With an impatient movement Reginald tossed the whole heap of poetry into an empty drawer and went off to the club to play pool.

AND yet, as he was the first to realize, this postponement of his troubles was the last way in which to win that prize—and the other Prize that went with it. And so, without mentioning his intended entry, he took occasion to discuss the general subject of poetry with the men whom he met at his club and in the train. What kind of poetry, he asked them, did they consider the best?

Most of them were frank enough to admit that they couldn't see much use in poetry at all. If a fellow had something to say, they pointed out, why couldn't he just say it—instead of wrapping it up in a lot of flapdoodle and poppycock just so as to make it more difficult? The remaining minority, when they had got over their shyness and surprise, said that they liked something with a swing. Pressed still further, it turned out that the only poem they really cared for was "If."

In the course of days—and with only a fortnight left now before the closing date for entries—Reginald found himself coming to an inevitable conclusion. The committee had chosen "Foreshadowings" and the other examples of this type simply because nothing with swing, punch, or meaning had come along. And after all, when you considered that the prize only amounted to what anyone could get for five thousand words in a medium-class magazine, this wasn't so very surprising. Why *should* people who could really write verse trouble to go in for a competition like that?

And so—with his mind at last made up—he sat down at his typewriter and rattled off a stunning little thing of about thirty lines, which began *"What's the use of feeling blue? Other folks have troubles, too."* He called it "But"—which was as near as he dared go to "If"—and when he had finished it he put it on one side; for he still had a little time in hand, and it might be just as well to give it a final polishing up before it left him for good.

He saw Miss Wilkinson every week-end, though the long-haired Hilary was generally there, too. She was friendliness itself—to both of them—but if ever he got her alone for a moment and attempted to press his suit, she stopped him at once.

"I can't discuss it," she said. "I am doing the best I can in a very difficult situation, and I cannot possibly give you any encouragement—which I might afterwards regret—until the result of the competition is known."

Reginald Gooch exposed his regular teeth in a look of quiet confidence.

"In three weeks," he said, meaningly, "I shall be buying an engagement-ring. Perhaps it would save delay if you gave me the size of your finger."

But all that Miss Wilkinson would say was: "Wait."

AND so Reginald waited, and on the evening before he was due to post his entry he dined alone at Otto Klinck's apartment to discuss the arrangements for a forthcoming musical comedy.

"I've got some darned good stuff here," said Mr. Klinck modestly, as he seated himself at the piano after dinner. "Just get out your paper, old man, and I'll run it over for you. Now, this is the bit where the girl

says to the feller, 'I can never marry a millionaire.' That's the band cue, you see, and then we want something really fruity. Strong sentiment; get me?"

"Let her go," said Reginald. And as Mr. Klinck's fat fingers flew over the keys, he dashed down his dummy verse.

"*Over the garden wall,*" he wrote, "*to-morrow is to-day.*
I say.
Gently, gently, in and out
Whoop-de-oodle I'm the king of the castle
Running around, yes, running around
Each way."

And so on.

It was a very satisfactory evening. At the end of it Messrs. Gooch and Klinck toasted each other in Mr. Klinck's oldest whisky, and then Reginald bade his host and collaborator farewell.

"Don't forget," Mr. Klinck shouted down the elevator shaft. "The sooner you can fix it, the better for all of us."

"Right you are," yelled Reginald; and with his notes safe in his pocket he ran off to catch the last train.

The next day he made such progress with his lyrics that at five o'clock, when he knocked off work, he was able to post quite a selection to the composer for his approval; and then—with a last, appreciative look at "But"—he dashed off a covering letter to the committee, and dropped the two communications down the mail-chute.

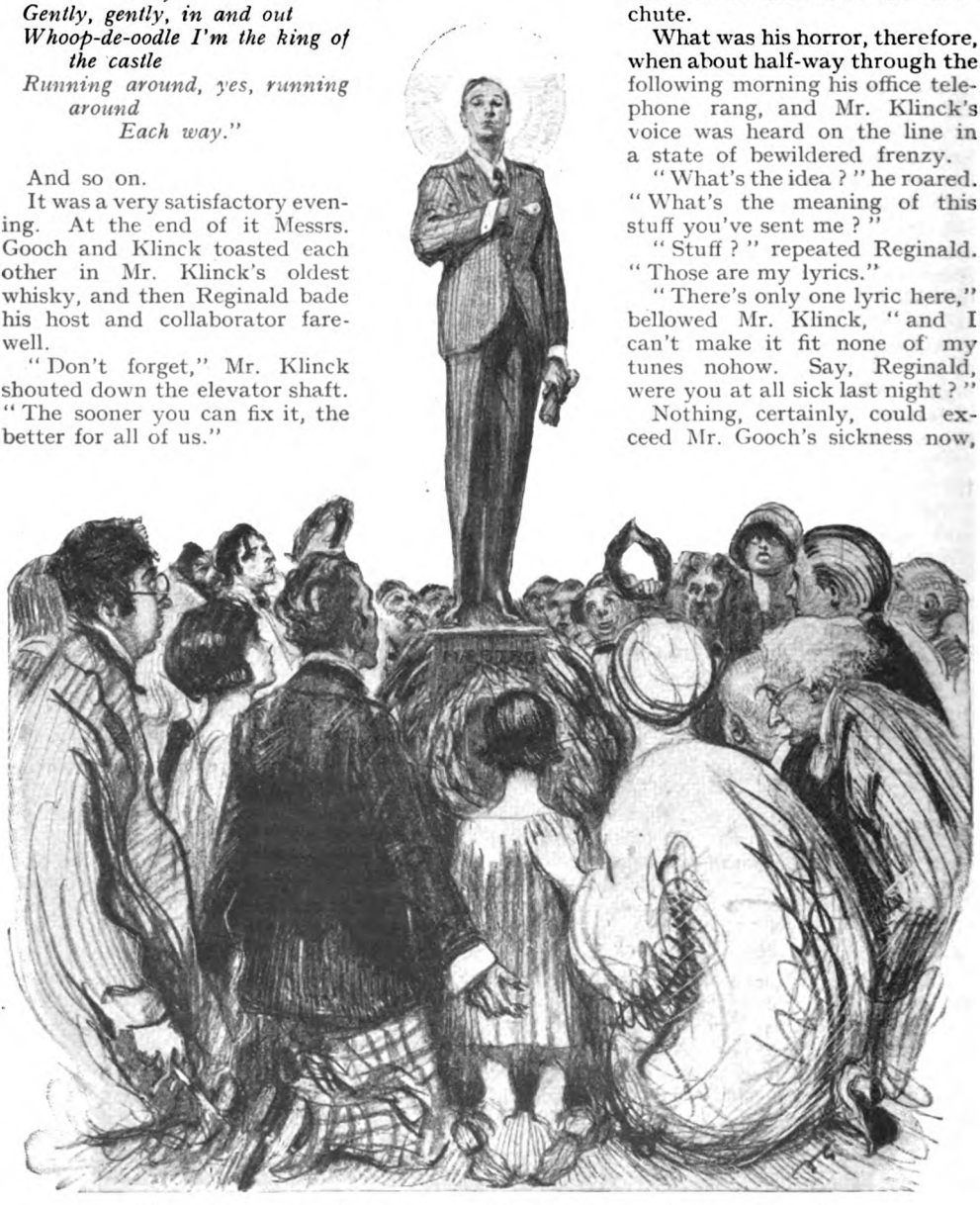
What was his horror, therefore, when about half-way through the following morning his office telephone rang, and Mr. Klinck's voice was heard on the line in a state of bewildered frenzy.

"What's the idea?" he roared. "What's the meaning of this stuff you've sent me?"

"Stuff?" repeated Reginald. "Those are my lyrics."

"There's only one lyric here," bellowed Mr. Klinck, "and I can't make it fit none of my tunes nohow. Say, Reginald, were you at all sick last night?"

Nothing, certainly, could exceed Mr. Gooch's sickness now,



His position at the head of twentieth-century poets is secure for life.

as he replaced the receiver with a palsied hand. By some infernal piece of carelessness he had put his poem and his lyrics in the wrong envelopes. His precious "But," which was to have won him a wife, could not—even if he recovered it from the outraged composer—possibly reach the committee in time. The rules had distinctly said, "Not later than the first post on the morning of the fifteenth."

With a groan, and regardless of the renewed ringing of his telephone bell, he turned to the drawer where his prize poem had lain—hoping even now that he might have sent the carbon copy to the adjudicators. But the carbon copy was still there, and on top of it—to his astonishment—he saw the lyrics which he had written yesterday.

Then what the dickens *had* he sent to the committee ?

Suddenly we see him flapping wildly at his pockets, running across to his other jacket, tearing open drawers and cupboards, and shifting the furniture like a man possessed. And then, as the cold truth broke upon him, he sank into his revolving chair and covered his face with his hands.

He had gone and sent in—with that covering letter—the dummy which he had written at Otto Klinck's last night !

IT was over, then. Heaven had never intended that Cassandra Wilkinson should be his. He remembered his boast about the engagement-ring, he thought of Hilary Moulton triumphing in his stead—for in his mind no other competitor existed—and he exposed his regular teeth in a sour grimace of unutterable despair.

For the next three weeks he kept obstinately away from the Gables. Even when Cassandra sent an inquiry as to his health (through her brother, whom he met at the Golf Club), Reginald Gooch returned no answering message. If he had got to live without her for the rest of his days, then the sooner he took the knife to this festering sore, the better. He hoped she would be happy with Hilary, but at the same time he would far prefer not to think about it. The cup of rapture into which he had once gazed had indeed been dashed from his lip. He went on with his accustomed work grimly and fiercely. But he knew that he had nothing to live for now. The canker was too near his heart.

NEVERTHELESS, Cassandra Wilkinson is, at the time of writing, Cassandra Gooch ; and from the moment that she was admitted to the secret of her husband's income she has, like a true wife, never so much as breathed a word of criticism of the means by which it is earned. For there was not even an instant's doubt in the minds of the Adjudication Committee. From the second that their eyes lit on Reginald's verses, their decision was inevitable. Never before had they seen, and never again could they hope to have submitted, an entry which achieved so triumphantly the requirements of modern poetry. Its complete formlessness, its entire absence of meaning, and its staggering originality put it at once in a class by itself. The voting was absolutely unanimous, and Hilary Moulton's effort did not even secure honourable mention.

Reginald was nervous for a time that he might be expected to repeat his success, or (worse still) that the news of it might shake the confidence of his ordinary employers. But he need not have worried. His position at the head of twentieth-century poets needs no defending. He is secure in it for life ; while—so large is the world—his two classes of admirer have not the faintest chance of ever meeting, or even of hearing of one another.

Yet, should this happen, it is certain that they would only decide that there must be two Reginald Gooches. And so there are ; but both of them are safely and happily married to Cassandra Wilkinson.

PETER INTERVENES

BY

EDGAR JEPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

I.

PETER was a thoughtful boy; but he deceived the eye. His air of solemnity accorded ill with an essential lightness of spirit not far removed from flippancy; his parsimony in the matter of words gave him not infrequently an appearance of dullness which accorded ill with an acumen in practical matters which left nothing to be desired, except by those who suffered from it. His leisureliness of movement gave him an appearance of slowness that accorded ill with his catlike quickness when such quickness was plainly demanded by circumstances he had frequently brought about, but over which he had no control. Policemen in London and gamekeepers in the country had observed it with admiration not unmingled with disgust.

Although Peter Stixwould was not one of those Admirable Crichtons who airily sop up the paradigms of the irregular Greek verbs, the dates of the English sovereigns, and the names of the Kings of Israel and Judah, he did know the weight of heroes, of Jimmy Wilde, of Dempsey, of Carpentier, and of Firpo. Also, though but thirteen summers had passed over his fair young head, he promised to become expert with the gloves. He had the eye and the head. He had already collected the cups for the school under-fourteen quarter-mile and half-mile handicaps. There was a mercenary streak in Peter. He had a preference for sports which rewarded the right expenditure of energies with cups.

On that chill and misty March evening, as Peter came along the bottom of Primrose Hill on his way home to supper, he became aware, dimly, of light footsteps coming along at a run on the path behind him. Then out of the dusk appeared a dark figure which became a running girl who panted as she ran. He saw that she was pale and scared and pretty, with large dark eyes.

A London boy, he always took an interest in his fellow-creatures; and as she passed he fell into an easy trot beside her and said: "What's the matter?"

"They're — after me — they're — just behind," said the panting girl.

Peter listened and heard some way down the path behind them the sound of heavier footsteps coming along at a good pace.

"Who are?" he asked.

"Zimmy and Long Jake," she said.

To Peter these sounded pleasing names of a certain promise; but they told him nothing.

"What do they want?" he said.

The girl held up a small brown-paper packet in her left hand and said nothing. She was wasting none of the little breath she had left.

They ran on another twenty steps; and the steps of the pursuers grew ominously louder. It might be a stern chase, but it was not going to be a long one. The idea came to Peter.

"Give it to me," he said, quickly. "I'll cut on and meet you somewhere later and give it back to you. They won't catch *me*."

The girl ran on another five or six steps, frowning in perplexity. The louder sound of her pursuers' feet made up her mind for her. She handed him the packet and dropped into a walk.

"Chalk Farm Station at nine o'clock to-morrow night. Bolt!" she said.

He gripped the packet, thrust it into his pocket, and vanished in the dusk ahead.

As he came out of the gate into King Henry's Road he nearly ran into Police-constable Robinson, a friendly policeman. He loved Martha Jennings, the Stixwoulds' cook. Peter slackened his pace and cried :—

"There are a couple of hooligans annoying a young lady on the lower path!"

A shrill cry from the hill confirmed the statement. Police-constable Robinson left like the wind.

Peter was taking no chances. Zimmy and Long Jake might have caught sight of him with the girl. He made a circuit into the Primrose Hill Road, and walked up it quietly into the Adelaide Road. Then he walked up to the top of Eton Place and peeped round the corner. Eton Place was empty. He crossed the Adelaide Road to 120. Though he had a latchkey, he did not go up the front steps to the front door. They were lighted brightly by the street lamp; and he would be visible from the bottom of Eton Place. He went to the back door in the basement, hidden by the garden hedge. The paradigms of the irregular Greek verbs might have found no place in his memory; he could have gained nearly full marks in a paper on all the detective stories he had ever read.

In answer to his somewhat imperative knock, Martha Jennings opened the door to him.

"Now, why do you come disturbing me when all you've got to do is to walk up the steps and let yourself in, Master Peter?" she asked.

Martha knew, as Dr. and Mrs. Stixwould did not, that Peter had the lost latchkey. Martha had her reasons for not telling them. Peter also knew things.

"Dick Robinson is on duty to-night. I

"What's the matter?"
"They're—after me—they're—just behind," said the panting girl.

thought you'd like to know," he said, evasively.

Martha blushed; but she said, loftily: "And what odds does it make to me?"

Since Peter had seen Police-constable Robinson kiss Martha in that very passage he was not deceived. But he did not tell her so. He went lightly up to his bedroom on the second floor, took the packet out of his pocket, and examined it. He could easily have untied the knot and opened it. But he supposed that since it had been entrusted to him he ought not to do so. He did not. But he felt it carefully. He found that there was a softer wrapping under the brown paper, and under that small lumps. Detectively he perceived at once that it must contain diamonds. He put it at the back of the bottom drawer of his chest of drawers, and came down to supper, thoughtful.

II.

HE awoke next morning to a bright world, though the London sky was of the most dismal grey. His first act was to take the packet from the drawer to feast his eyes on it. It occurred to him that probably he ought to consult the police about it. He did not let the thought trouble him. The police were always there—often when they were not wanted. Crooks were much rarer. He was not going to sever a pleasing connection with crooks by any foolish step of that kind.

The day passed slowly, but at last the evening came; and he went quietly out of the house at ten minutes to nine. He had decided to arrive at the tryst punctually, not to hang about the station. At the first stroke of nine from a neighbouring church clock he entered the station and looked around.

The pretty girl stood by the bookstall close to the lift. An anxious frown was on her face. The sight of Peter swept it right away. She took a step towards him with the beginning of a smile on her face. Of a sudden she frowned again, or rather she scowled, at something over Peter's head, and sprang through the closing gate of the lift with precious little to spare.

Peter's eyes turned into the lift in a stare of astonishment, and turned again to follow a tall, slim, narrow-faced, hook-nosed, black-eyed man, who dashed past him to the stairs to the platform and went fairly leaping down them. Peter's eyes turned again to the disappearing lift to catch a glimpse of the pretty girl listening with a slightly scornful air to the protests of the excited lift-man.

Peter walked out of the station slightly dazed. The unexpected had happened so quickly.

What was he to do? He did not know the name or the address of the girl. She did not know his name or address. How was she going to find it out and get the packet back?

He walked up the hill pondering the matter. The first conclusion he came to was that he might as well, in these circumstances, know what it was that the pretty girl had entrusted to him. On reaching home, therefore, he went up to his bedroom, untied the string, and opened the packet. He had been wrong. The stones were not diamonds; they were rubies, Burmese rubies, thirty-six of them in a necklace, perfectly graduated from the centre stone, which was of the size and shape of a sparrow's egg, to the two stones at the end, which were as large as marrowfat peas.

Peter liked the necklace very much. He tried it on. The effect was not satisfactory—girlish. But if the girl never did find him and it became his property, it meant wealth, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Then his shrewdness reasserted itself; it never would become his. He had more than a suspicion that it did not belong to the pretty girl. But it must belong to somebody.

He was quite aware that the necklace was not only a pleasure but a danger. He had gathered from many stirring tales a clear knowledge of the preternatural intellectuality of the crook. Sooner or later the gang adorned by Zimmy and Long Jake, who must be the tall, dark gentleman with the hook nose who had passed him so swiftly in Chalk Farm Station, would get on the track of it. Probably they would extract from the pretty girl, by torture, the fact that she had entrusted it to a boy; they would also extract from her an accurate description of that boy. The thing to do was to get rid of the necklace before they performed these extractions.

Also there must be money in it, money in quantity, if only he could hit on the right way of getting rid of it. He had splendid visions of a motor-car, a four-seater that went seventy miles an hour, also of a small, useful aeroplane, at any rate of a wireless set finer than any in South Hampstead. He realized, however, that these were dreams: money in quantity could never come a boy's way without his parents getting wind of it and putting it in the savings bank till he was grown up, when, of course, it would be practically useless. He decided to content himself with getting enough money out of it to make a really good wireless set—always supposing that he did not find the girl.

He did not find the girl. Police-constable Robinson could throw no light on her. He had rushed, as Peter had seen, to her

rescue, he had caught one of the men who had been molesting her, the shorter one. But when he had returned with him to the spot on which they had left her, she had gone. He said this in a gloomy tone and added :—

"So there was nothing to be done. So I cautioned 'im and 'elped 'im a bit of the way down the 'ill—with my foot."

"Well, that was better than nothing," said Peter, in a judicial tone.

"What I wanted was a conviction," said Police-constable Robinson, in a discontented voice.

At the moment promotion was very dear to him. He desired to become a blushing bridegroom at an early date.

That removed the girl farther than ever away, and left Peter still freer to get that wireless set out of the necklace. But he could not discover any way of doing so. Obviously he could not take it to a jeweller and sell it by ordinary process. He did not for a moment dream of taking it to the police and letting them find the owner. It was his experience that in this world a boy gets very little justice, and that a police-station is one of the worst places in which to look for it.

He became a reader of newspapers ; not of much of them, only of the Personal and Advertising columns. In vain. No one advertised a reward for a ruby necklace. It began almost to prey upon his spirit. There it was, eating its head off so to speak, and no way of making half a crown out of it. It was disheartening.

THEN his Uncle George came to London and lightened his gloom. As uncles go, he was young—only twenty-eight—and uncommonly friendly. He it was who looked to Peter's lawn tennis and golf and had him spend his holidays at Stixwould Manor, from which he farmed a thousand acres. Peter had thoughts of taking him into his confidence. But he hesitated. Friendly as his uncle was, if there was money in quantity in the necklace, into the savings bank it would go.

Then his uncle led him to the girl.

He took him to dine at the Olympian Club. After dinner the champions of the divisions of the London Police would box for a cup offered by the club. Peter went in the unstained Eton suit and white waistcoat of the young English gentleman, feeling remarkably IT.

They had finished their soup when there came to a table a little way from them, the best table in the big room, directly above the ring, a lady and a man. The lady was the girl of the necklace.

Peter recognized her at once, and his heart jumped in him. Sitting sideways to him, she did not see him. She talked to the man with her, a vigorous, heavily-built man of fifty. Peter studied him. He observed that his heavy face was impassive and expressionless, that his thin lips hardly moved as he talked, that his sunken brown eyes were piercing under his jutting brow, and that his complexion was of a curious brownish-grey—evidently a master criminal.

Then the girl turned to look round the room and saw Peter. Her eyes slowly opened wide in an astonished stare of recognition. Then she smiled at him and nodded. He nodded gravely in return.

Peter had thought her smile a nice smile ; his Uncle George had thought it ravishing ; and he said quickly, in a tone of considerable interest : "Who's your charming friend ?"

Not knowing who his charming friend was, Peter hesitated ; then he said : "It is a girl I met on Primrose Hill—I don't know her name."

"Then you can't introduce me to her," said his uncle, in a tone of regret.

"I might get the chance," said Peter, cautiously.

The girl spoke to her companion, who looked at Peter with grave interest. George Stixwould seemed to be in a state of lively curiosity. He questioned Peter about his meeting with the girl. Peter was in a secretive vein. He omitted the stirring incidents which had distinguished that meeting. He conveyed to his uncle the impression that he and the girl had but talked casually—ships that pass in the night. He wondered all the while what she was going to do. This was not the meeting he had expected. He had always seen himself and the girl meeting alone. He noticed that she kept glancing at him with little thoughtful frowns, as if she had not hit upon the right course to take. He left it to her. Thought would take too much of his attention from his excellent dinner. Then at the end of it, just as he had heaved his second deep sigh of satisfaction, she rose and came to the table and held out her hand. Peter rose and took it ; and his uncle rose.

"You've forgotten me—Jenny Helston—I thought you were coming to tea with me at 71, Endsleigh Gardens," she said, giving Peter the fullest possible information.

"Oh, no ; I haven't forgotten you at all," said Peter ; and there came a gentle, suggestive kick on the back of his leg from his uncle. He responded to it on the instant, and added : "Let me introduce my Uncle George—Mr. Stixwould, Miss Helston."

That was what Jenny Helston had desired. She smiled upon George Stixwould a smile quite as ravishing as that she had

bestowed upon Peter, and said: "Won't you come and drink your coffee with us? You'll get a much better view of the boxing from our table."

George accepted the unexpected invitation with manifest briskness. They went to the other table; and she introduced them to her companion, her father. He welcomed them with a heavy urbanity, ordered coffee and liqueurs, and gave George a large and excellent cigar. They talked—at least, George and Miss Helston talked—about the topics of the hour, dancing, lawn tennis, and musical comedy. Then the boxing began. They drew their chairs nearer the balustrade of the balcony. Jenny contrived to get George on her right, Peter on her left. Two large policemen began to punch one another with dogged enthusiasm.

In the middle of the second round Jenny Helston squeezed Peter's arm and whispered: "Don't look round. Have you still got my parcel?"

Peter nodded.

"Does anybody know about it?"

Peter shook his head.

"You *are* a clever boy!" she said, in a tone of admiration. "Let's see. You mustn't bring it to the house. It's watched. I tell you what: can you meet me half-way up Haverstock Hill at nine to-morrow night?"

Peter nodded.

"On the left-hand side. You walk up the hill, and I'll come down it. If anything goes wrong and I don't come, you know my address, 71, Endsleigh Gardens. Come to tea the day after to-morrow. But don't bring the parcel there."

Peter nodded. She squeezed his arm gratefully and turned her attention to the boxing.

They spent a pleasant and profitable evening observing the strenuous efforts of those worthy men. Between the bouts Peter observed that his Uncle George and Jenny Helston grew more and more friendly. They established an identity of taste in many matters of the greatest importance. Mr. Helston appeared to be of a phlegmatic temperament. He must have had views on these important matters. But he did not divulge them. Peter studied him with extraordinary interest. He might never again in his life come across a master criminal. The curious angle at which the big man's cigar stuck, with apparent precariousness, in the corner of his mouth, the obviously cynical distrust with which he watched the battling policemen, his lapses into profound thought, with his eyes half closed, evidently about nefarious enterprises—nothing was lost on Peter. Undoubtedly a Napoleon of crime. With an ingenuous boy's proneness to hero worship, he would have backed him against Sherlock Holmes for a week's pocket-money.

No one would have been more surprised, or annoyed, by these unspoken tributes Peter was lavishing on him than Mr. Sam Helston himself. Freedom's choicest friend, much of his life had been spent in landing guns and ammunition on the shores of oppressed communities burning to make a bid for it. He had acquired the very necklace itself in Freedom's cause. It had been torn from an agent of the Bolshevists who had stolen it, when it was on its way to Glasgow to be sold to further the Red Revolution. Mr. Sam Helston had paid a good price for it; and that money was to be used to smuggle Bolshevist victims out of Russia. But the Glasgow Bolshevists had used their political influence to have the lukewarm police set to recover it. It could not be handled or owned openly; and Zimmy, Long Jake, and Co., a gang of whose reputation he was well aware, were taking advantage of the fact to try to acquire it for themselves. But crime? Nothing could be, or had ever been, farther from Mr. Sam Helston's mind. The English law was quite dear to him.

The policemen ceased to battle; the party rose. George and Jenny Helston, still intent on establishing the fullness of their identity of taste, went off to continue the process at Ciro's over a fox-trot or two. Mr. Helston murmured something about the R.A.C. and a game of poker; and at the door of the club they parted.

III.

PETER took his solitary way home a little depressed by the fact that the owner of the necklace had emerged to claim it. Yet he was not greatly depressed.

His Uncle George was grateful to him for the introduction to Jenny Helston—so grateful that next morning he presented him with five shillings. Peter accepted it a little doubtfully. He could not but wonder whether his lavish uncle would have been as pleased to have made Jenny Helston's acquaintance if he had known as much about her as he did. He found the situation rather awkward. He felt that he ought to tell his uncle about her activities and acquaintances, but he did not feel justified in divulging her secret. After all, he had asked her to entrust him with the packet. He decided to wait and see.

At ten minutes to nine the next night he started to walk up Haverstock Hill. The sky was heavy with dark clouds; it was warm for April, muggy in fact. It was a good dark night for returning the necklace unobserved. A hundred yards south of Belsize Park Station Jenny met him. They

greeted one another, and he gave her the precious packet.

"Thank you ever so much," she said, slipping it into her handbag. Then she paused before closing the bag, and added: "Have you any idea what's in it?"

"Rather!" said Peter. "When I lost you that night at Chalk Farm Station, and it seemed quite likely that I mightn't see you again, I thought I'd better open it and see what it was all about."

Even in the dim light he could see that she looked taken aback.

"Have you told anybody about it?" she said, quickly.

"Rather not," said Peter.

"But how nice of you!" she exclaimed. "And how sensible! You really deserve——"

She took from the handbag a gold-mesh purse, and from that purse a note that really crinkled.

"Here: will you buy yourself something nice—something you really want?" she said, holding it out to him.

Peter hesitated. There was a conflict. His better nature prevailed. No, you couldn't take money for helping a damsel in distress—and such distress—Long Jake and Zimmy.

"No, thank you," he said, manfully. "I was—I was—I mean—only too happy to oblige."

"But you must—just for a memento, you know," she said, in an extremely persuasive voice; and she veritably thrust the note on him.

Peter yielded.

"Thanks awfully," he said, and put it into his pocket with a thrill at the feel of it. It indeed was no Bradbury.

Then impulsively she kissed him. Peter blushed to his ears. But, oddly enough, he rather liked it. There *was* a strain of romance in him.

That kiss involved him yet further in the affair; it delayed his parting with Jenny just a few seconds. A big limousine was coming noiselessly and slowly down the hill. The light of its lamps illumined the embrace. It drew to the kerb; a tall, slim man sprang from it and dashed at them.

"I've got you!" he cried, triumphantly, as he gripped Jenny.

She screamed. He picked her up, and before Peter could act had bundled her into the limousine and stepped in after her.

"Tell Dad! At once!" she cried from its depths.

PETER bolted down the hill. There was a shout; and the car came after him.

Seventy yards down the hill it ran a dozen yards past him and stopped in little more than twice its length. The driver threw his legs over the wheel and jumped with a vigour which landed him ten feet away on the pavement; and Peter nearly ran into him. He dodged smartly; but the man caught his arm, swung him towards the limousine, and thrust him through the door of it, opened to receive him.

Long Jake gripped him and jammed him down hard on the seat beside Jenny, saying in a soft, very vicious voice: "Stay quiet, you cub!"

Peter stayed quiet. Jenny gripped his hand and squeezed it in a reassuring fashion.

The car turned and went up the hill.

Long Jake snatched Jenny's hand-bag from her, took the packet from it, and fairly tore it open. The rubies gleamed dully in the light of the street lamps.

"Got it at last!" he said, in a tone of immense triumph.

"Dad will have a word to say about that," said Jenny, quickly.

"There'll be a nice bit of blue water between me and Sam Helston before he learns that I've got it," said Long Jake; and he sneered.

"He'll know you've got it directly I don't come home," she said.

"That'll give me three or four good hours. You weren't taking it straight back, I know. And my getaway is all ready," he said, confidently.

"He'll get you—sooner or later," said Jenny, with cold certainty.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Long Jake.

Jenny shut up; and for three or four minutes there was silence.

Long Jake broke it. He said in a venomous tone: "As I size it up, it was this young cub who made all the extra trouble for us. You must have passed it on to him that evening on Primrose Hill."

"It's likely, isn't it? A boy like him," said Jenny, in a scoffing tone.

"It is," said Long Jake, with conviction. "And I'll lay that he set that copper on us. Ah, well!"

Two of the simplest words in the language; but Peter did not like the tone.

"Bats," said Jenny. "Bats in the belfry."

Long Jake scorned to reply to the charge. He drew down the blinds to hide from them the country through which they were passing. Peter could feel that the car was not hurrying—about thirty miles an hour—and it was not more than ten minutes later that it came to a stop. Long Jake kept a tight hold on Peter's arm as they stepped out of it; but he did not take the trouble to hold Jenny. Evidently he thought little of her sprinting capacity.

They had arrived at a small, ugly house at the end of a lane. Their captors conducted them down the little garden. Long

"I've got you!" he cried, triumphantly. He picked her up, and before Peter could act had bundled her into the limousine.

Jake opened the front door and thrust Peter through it. Jenny followed him.

Jake stopped on the threshold and said to the driver of the car, "Get along to Finkelstein, and get to him quick. Tell him if he wants the rubies he's got to come here with the money. I'm not taking any chances at that trap of his. He'll come with it all right if he's allowed to bring Shanks to look after him: and with any luck we ought to be on our way to the boat in an hour from now."

"Right you are," said the driver, and he hurried to the car.

Long Jake shut the door and switched on the electric light—plainly they were not far from civilization—displaying a small, bare hall.

"Upstairs," he said, curtly; and they went up the stairs before him.

On the landing he opened a door into a bedroom on the right, bade Jenny get into it, and locked her in. Then he took hold of Peter's arm, led him into a bedroom on the other side of the landing, switched on the electric light, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, dropped the hand-bag on the dressing-table, and crossed to the chest of drawers.

So far Peter, though he had looked hard for one, had not had the slightest chance. He realized that Long Jake's precautions were a tribute. He could have done without it.

Long Jake took from a drawer a ball of thick string and turned to Peter: "I'm going to tie you up, you young devil," he said, in an unpleasant tone; and Peter thought that he had one of the most repulsive faces he had ever seen. "I'm not going to take any chance of your making any more trouble." He pulled a good length of string from the ball, stuck out that repulsive face towards Peter, and glaring into his eyes added: "And when I have tied you up, I'm going to give you the damnedest licking you ever had. I'll teach you to go interfering with me!"

All this was very unpleasant hearing. Jake paused to emphasize the threat with a hideous grin. That short delay gave Peter's mind time to work. It flashed on it that he might as well be licked for a sheep as a lamb; and there was that chin sticking out at just a nice distance. He hit it.

A blow from a boy of thirteen and a half ought to have hardly staggered the long crook, though Peter had put every ounce of his weight behind it. But Jake's pronounced chin must have been sticking out at a most convenient angle, for, without even sagging, he dropped in a heap.

It was once more a case of no one being more surprised than the striker. Peter wasted a good three seconds staring at the exceedingly recumbent form before he got to work. Then he got to work quickly. In half a minute Long Jake was lying face downwards with his hands tied behind his back, and Peter was tying his ankles. He made a thorough job of it. There was plenty of string; and he used all he wanted. As a final touch he thrust his handkerchief into Long Jake's mouth. It was not a clean handkerchief; but since it was marked only with his initials he thought that he might safely leave it behind him.

IV.

THEN Peter went through his prisoner—with the literature of the subject at his fingers' ends, naturally he knew the right procedure. He acquired two pound notes, two ten-shilling notes, a handful of silver, which he did not pause to count, a very pleasing automatic pistol of medium size, and a bunch of keys—the lawful spoils of war. Also he acquired the key of the bedroom door and the key of the bedroom in which Jenny was prisoner.

He found that the magazine of the automatic was full of cartridges, but he was compelled to hunt for spare ones. What were ten cartridges? At once he found a box with forty in it in the drawer from which Jake had taken the string. Greatly relieved, he thrust it into his pocket, took Jenny's handbag, with the necklace still in it, from the dressing-table, let himself out of the room, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, crossed the landing, and unlocked the door of Jenny's prison.

It would not open. It jammed against the back of a chair fixed under the handle.

"You stay where you are, Jake," said Jenny, in a cool, determined voice. "Try to come in here, and I'll brain you."

"It's all right," said Peter, in a reassuring voice. "It's only me."

There was a sharp exclamation of surprise; and she opened the door. In her hand, with the intent to brain, she held the water-jug. She stared at Peter, holding out her handbag, as if she could not believe her eyes. Then she dropped the jug, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him. Peter blenched, but he did not blush. He was growing used to it.

"Well, of all the boys I ever came across or heard of!" she said, in a tone of profound admiration.

And she looked so like kissing him again that he said very sharply: "Come on! Hurry up! Let's get out of this!"

She needed no further pressing; and they ran down the stairs and bustled out of the house. Peter paused to pick up a handful of fine gravel and pushed quite a lot of it into

"I'm going to tie you up, you young devil!" he said, in an unpleasant tone.

the keyhole. "Just to keep them busy a bit," he explained.

"I tell you what; you're wasted on South Hampstead," said Jenny, thoughtfully, and with profound conviction.

As they came down the garden path the hum of an aeroplane broke the country stillness, and above the trees to the south rose a large and shining machine.

"The Paris mail—Hendon. We haven't got far from London," said Peter, in a tone of satisfaction.

They started to run down the lane; but they had not gone fifty yards when he stopped short.

"Here, this won't do," he said, in a tone of decision. "We shall run straight into that car coming back."

Memories of the foolishness of the heroes of his favourite books were guiding him. They *always* ran into the villain's arms.

He looked up the lane and down it, and across the fields. Jenny looked at him anxiously, awaiting his decision. He had definitely taken the lead.

"I tell you what: that wood's the place for us," he said, pointing across the field to the south. "They'll never think to look for us there; and if they did, they'd never catch us. It's so easy to dodge people in a wood."

"That wood? On a dark night like this?" said Jenny, with a little shiver. "I should be frightened out of my life."

"What ever of?" said Peter, astonished.

"All kinds of things," said Jenny, and she shivered again.

Peter was surprised and rather disappointed in her. That a girl who had been so ready to brain Long Jake should be frightened of an ordinary wood seemed to him truly astonishing. He saw that she really was terrified. But the thing for them to do was to get into the wood, and into the wood they were going to get.

"I'll look after you all right," he said, confidently, and, taking her firmly by the arm, he hurried her down the road to a gate in the hedge, and they climbed over it.

He gave her no time to let her fears get the better of her, but hurried her across the field to the side of the wood. An easy gap in the hedge let them into it; and they stopped, panting. Of course, a pheasant must needs squawk deeper in the wood. Jenny uttered a faint cry, and clutched his arm with a trembling hand.

"There they are!" she cried, in terrified accents.

A strong suspicion that she must be a beginner, that this was the very first *coup* in which she had taken part, rose in Peter's mind. He was a trifle disappointed. He would have preferred her to have been the heroine of many *coups*.

"It's only a pheasant," he said, in a reassuring voice. "And that's an owl," he added, as she jumped at the long-drawn hoot. Then he made a concession; he said: "We won't go any deeper into the wood. We shall be all right here unless it occurs to them to try it."

"I shall never be able to stand it!" Jenny almost wailed.

"Oh, yes, you will," he said, and she was trembling so that he took her hand, held it tight, and told her what harmless birds or animals were making the noises and the rustlings that came from the trees and the undergrowth.

He had managed to get her calm and considerably reassured when the car came back along the lane and diverted her attention from those fearsome sounds. It stopped at the house; and three men got out of it. The house was not more than sixty yards from the edge of the wood, so that Peter and Jenny could see their earnest efforts to get into it, for the lamps of the car illumined them. They watched them with great pleasure. At last they broke into one of the lower rooms through the window; and they went on using that window as their means of ingress and egress. Apparently the gravel in the door-lock was still doing its bit. It must have been a good half-hour after the arrival of the car that the three of them and Long Jake came through the window, got into it, and drove off.

JENNY had been too greatly interested in the doings of her enemies to have any attention to spare for the terrors of the wood; and now she seemed to have grown immune from them. She raised no objection when Peter suggested that they should work their way down through the wood to Hendon. They made their way along the edge of it till they came to a broad, turfed, and mossy drive, running north and south, and went down it, conversing cheerfully. The moon kept breaking through the clouds and lighting up the drive.

But when they came to the end of it they suffered a check. Along the edge of it ran a broad high road, and on the other side of that road meadows, in which was very little covert, stretched away to the lights of Hendon.

Peter surveyed their expanse gloomily, and said gloomily: "We're stuck for a bit. It would be all right for me. They'd never catch me. But if they did happen to come back up this road and saw us in those fields, they'd catch you to a dead certainty."

"I certainly don't want to be caught after your knocking out Jake and tying him up," she said, quickly. "I've heard he's a brute at the best of times, and after that he'll be furious. And whatever you do you mustn't let him get hold of *you*."

"I won't," said Peter. "After all, I've got his pistol, and, if I have to, I'll use it on him. Well, we may as well sit down and be comfortable. This bank's quite dry."

He dropped on to it; she sat down beside him and said: "A pistol's a useful thing in this game. But over here there's always such a stupid fuss made about shooting anybody, however hard they ask for it, that Dad won't let me carry one. It was different in the States, South America—gun-running, you know—I nearly always carried one there, and I've used it too, more than once."

"Ripping!" said Peter, with enthusiasm; and he forgot her astonishing, childish fear of this quite ordinary wood. "What a splendidly exciting time you must have had!"

The moon was shining on her charming, vivid face; and he saw her frown darkly. "Oh, exciting?" she said, in a tone of extreme discontent. "I'm just fed up with excitement. I've been worrying Dad for a long time to buy a place in the country and settle down and keep chickens and lead a quiet life."

"Or have a farm like Uncle George," suggested Peter.

"Yes; he was telling me about that farm the other night," said Jenny, thoughtfully. She added, wistfully: "It sounded a lovely kind of place."

She was silent for a while; then she asked

him questions about his Uncle George. Peter gave him the best of characters, for he had the highest opinion of him, both as an uncle and a sportsman. Jenny seemed to receive it with interest and pleasure. She drew from him the history of his Uncle George's life as far as he knew it. Undoubtedly she was greatly interested in his Uncle George.

But then, when he came to the end of it, she sighed sharply and said: "But what's the good? There's nothing in it now that the beastly Bolshies have got the police fussing about these Russian jewels. But Dad was right to help those poor prisoners."

To Peter the words sounded somewhat cryptic; and he said: "Nothing in what?"

She looked at him rather oddly and said: "Something I was thinking about."

Then she turned the conversation to the history of Peter's life.

They sat there for nearly an hour—so cautious was Peter. Then they decided that it should be fairly safe to try to get to Hendon and a taxi.

They crossed the road to the gate of the field opposite. They kept along the hedge, which unfortunately was a low one. Peter kept his eyes about him, especially in the direction of the road. They came to the farther hedge, got through it, and half-way across the second field, when away out on his left, coming from the road at an angle to cut across their course to Hendon, he saw two figures running. The crooks had driven down the road to London, stopped at a point at which they could command a view of the country, and waited quietly for them to make for home.

"Hang!" said Peter. "Here they come!"

They started to run. But it was an exercise to which Jenny was unused; and their pace was poor. When they reached the farther hedge of the fourth field their pursuers were a third of the way across it, Long Jake leading by twenty yards. As they scrambled through an awkward gap a briar tore Jenny's stocking and drew blood.

It seemed to be the last straw, for she stopped short, and said in imperative accents: "Give me the pistol!"

Peter had been thinking that the time had come to fall back on the pistol. He had meant to use it himself; but those accents were too imperative to be disobeyed. Without a word he handed it to her.

She crouched behind the hedge, her face white with anger, her eyes shining with astonishing brightness, a very dangerous smile playing round her lips. Long Jake uttered a shout of triumph when he saw that they had come to a standstill, and he sprinted.

He was not more than twenty yards from the hedge when she cried: "Take that, you Jake!" and fired.

Jake stopped short, spun round with a loud howl, and sat down with his back to them. It was not quite his evening.

His friend turned round and ran much harder than he had been running.

V.

"AND that's that," said Jenny, handing the pistol to Peter and turning to start to Hendon.

"Ripping!" said Peter from his heart.

They went a few steps; and then he said, in a tone of surprise: "Aren't we going to see after his wound?"

"See after Long Jake?" said Jenny, in a tone of equal surprise. "You can't kill Long Jake! At least, so I've been told. Besides, I only got him in the shoulder; and Zimmy will come back and look after him."

Peter could see nothing to be said against the arrangement; and they went briskly over the fields to Hendon. There was no longer any need to run. At the corner of Bell Lane they found a motor-bus on the point of starting and clambered aboard it thankfully.

"Well, you'll be able to take the necklace where you want to without being interfered with," said Peter, in a tone of satisfaction. "You've certainly got rid of those two for the time being."

"Yes, thank goodness," said Jenny, with a faint sigh of relief. Then she added, thoughtfully: "I tell you what; you ought to have a share of the proceeds. I must speak to Dad about it. They'd certainly have got the necklace off us if it hadn't been for you. In fact, they did get it off us."

"Oh, no; thank you very much, but I couldn't do that," said Peter, quickly.

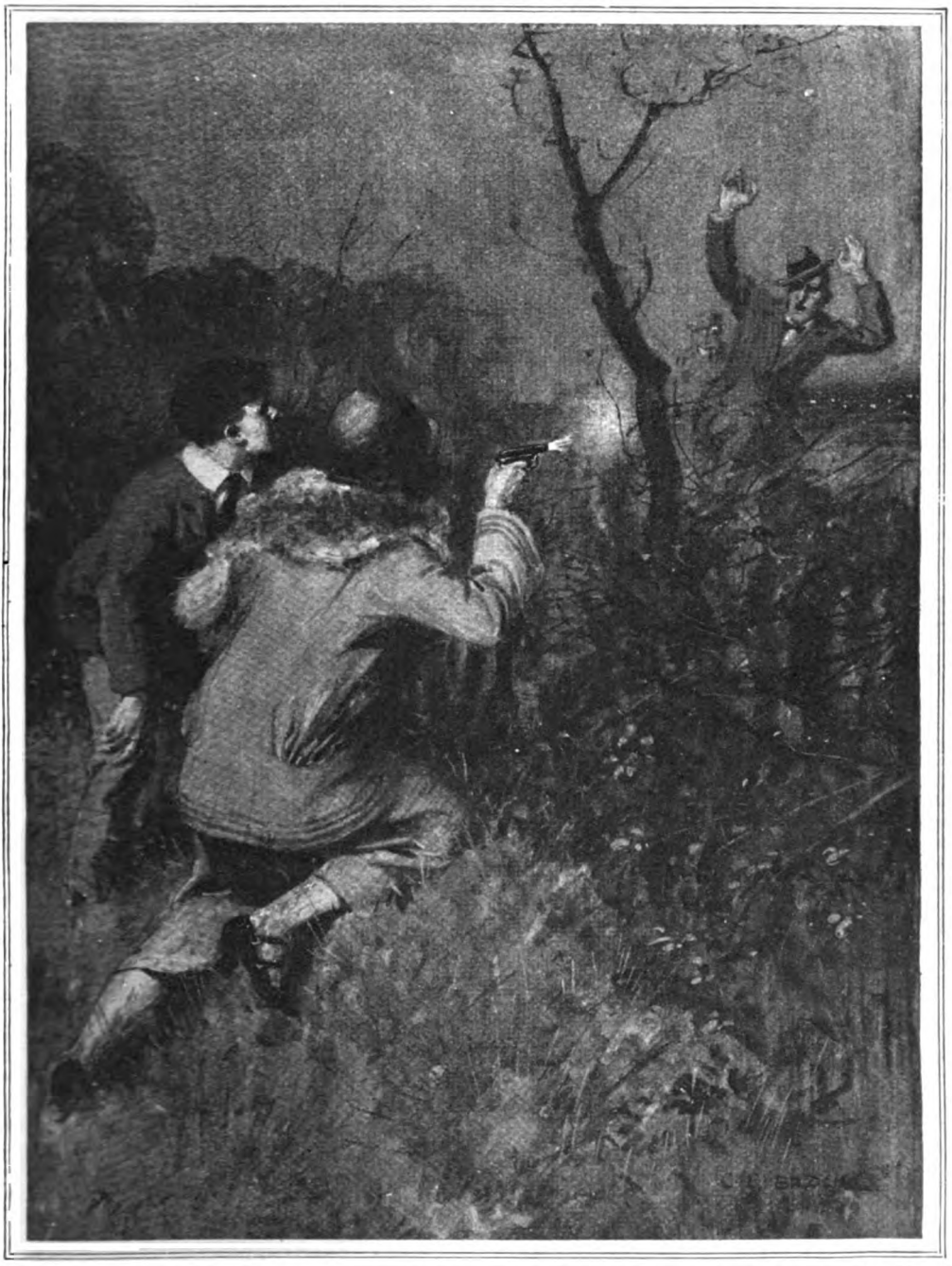
She looked at him with thoughtful eyes; then she said: "No; I don't suppose you could."

At Golder's Green they found a taxi and she told the driver to drive to 120, Adelaide Road. Peter talked of the events of the evening. She was thoughtful and monosyllabic.

Then with a manifest effort she said, slowly: "I tell you what; you'd better tell your uncle all about it—all about the necklace—and how you got to know me—and—and what happened to-night."

"All right," he said, doubtfully, astonished by the request.

He pondered it. A sophisticated London boy, and so well read in the literature of



He was not more than twenty yards from the hedge when she cried: "Take that, you Jake!" and fired.

his subject, which is so often adorned by a strong love interest, light dawned on him. As the taxi stopped at 120, his heart swelled within him with a noble impulse; he laid his hand on her arm and said in his manliest voice: "Look here; don't you worry about Uncle George. When I grow up I'll marry you myself."

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

What are our chances?

A COMPARISON BETWEEN BRITISH ... AND FOREIGN CHAMPIONS ...

BY

F.A.M. WEBSTER

THE VIIIth Olympiad takes place in Paris early in July, and every country is making the most strenuous efforts to put the best possible team into the field. In this article is given a short sketch of the careers of the men who are most likely to figure prominently in the Stadium at Colombes. At the present time it is of the very greatest interest to every class of reader to know what men our own will have to meet and what chance we have against them, and therefore the following particulars of the potential champions and record-breakers, which are believed to be made available for the first time in this country, are of unique interest and value.

AMERICA

In the past America has always proved victorious in the athletic section of the Olympic Games. The Olympic movement has, however, spread the cult of amateur athletics into every country, and America's margin of victories at Antwerp in 1920 was a small one. Since then the hunt for talent in the United States has been unceasing. It would be an easy matter to fill this article with the names of athletes who will probably masthead the Stars and Stripes at the Colombes Stadium ; but of all the men most likely to bring their country the highest honours the names of De Hart Hubbard, Charles Paddock, Fred Tootell, Ralph G. Hills, Joie Ray, Richmond Landon, and Leroy Brown stand out foremost.

DE HART HUBBARD.

(Broad Jump and Hop, Step, and Jump.)

De Hart Hubbard is twenty years of age and was educated at the Walnut Hills High School in his native Cincinnati until he entered the University of Michigan in 1921. He is one of the only two men in the world, both of them American Negroes, who have ever beaten 25ft. in the Broad Jump. The other is Ed. Gourdin, of Harvard University, who holds the official world's record of 25ft. 3in. But Gourdin is not so consistent a performer as his compatriot. It was in 1923, his first year of collegiate competitions, that Hubbard proved himself the equal of Gourdin, the record holder, in the Broad Jump, and almost the equal of Tuulos, the Finnish Olympic Champion, in the Hop, Step, and Jump.

In June, 1923, at the National Collegiate Championships at Chicago, he won the Broad Jump at 25ft. 2in., only an inch less than Gourdin's official world's record. At the Pennsylvania Relay Meet last year he won the Hop, Step, and Jump at 48ft. 10¾in.

DE HART HUBBARD
(America).

Hubbard has broken world's record twice unofficially with jumps of 25ft. 4in. and 25ft. 4½in., and in this event the only man likely to be in the same class with him at Paris is his fellow American-Negro, Gourdin.

He is a quiet, unassuming

R. W. LANDON
(America).

fellow, well liked at his University, and says, unpretentiously enough, "I am at present training for the Collegiate year, but expect to go to the Olympic Games, and, if fortune favours me, hope to break world's record in the Broad Jump."

He should have a good chance also in the Hop, Step, and Jump.

The Olympic Broad Jump Record stands at 24ft. 11¼in., established by A. L. Gutterson, U.S.A., at Stockholm in 1912. Great Britain's best Broad Jumper is H. M. Abrahams, C.U.A.C., whose best performance was his winning leap of 23ft. 8¾in. at the A.A.A. Championships in 1923.

The Olympic Hop, Step, and Jump Record stands at 48ft. 11¼in., made by Tim Ahearn, Great Britain, at London, 1908. Last year V. Tuulos, Finland, cleared 50ft. 5 9-10in. at the Gothenburg Games, which is only 5 1-10in. less than the world's record set up by T. J. Ahearn's brother, Dan, at Long Island, U.S.A., in 1909. Great Britain's best Triple Jumper is J. Odde, Polytechnic A.C., who last year won the A.A.A. Championship at 46ft. 4½in.

LEROY BROWN and RICHMOND W. LANDON.
(High Jumpers.)

The High Jump is an event in which America has always been peculiarly successful. In 1895 M. F. Sweeney set the world's record at 6ft. 5 5-8in. In 1912 G. F. Horine, Leland Stanford University, California, introduced the much-discussed "Western Roll," in which the athlete in going over drops his arm and keeps the bar in place with the biceps, then gives a violent twitch that lifts the hips higher than the head. In this style H. Osborne, of Illinois, has recently cleared 6ft. 7 7-16in.

This style, however, contravenes Rule XXVII. of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, and although I understand America will bring Osborne and Alberts to Paris, they are likely to be disqualified. It need not bother the Americans, for they have two other men beating 6ft. 5in., and fifteen clearing 6ft. 2in., from whom to take their pick.

Leroy Brown and R. W. Landon are the best of the bunch, and there is nothing to choose between them.

Brown, formerly of Stuyvesant High School, won great fame as a member of the Dartmouth Athletic Team. He stands 6ft. 4in. high, weighs 14½ stone, and is jocularly referred to as "The Long Drink of Water." He approaches the bar right from the side, but swings in for a forty-five degrees take-off, derives all his leap from his spring off the ground, and lands crouching. Last year he set up a new A.A.U. Championship record of 6ft. 5 5-8in., attempted 6ft. 8in., cleared it, and the crowd had started to cheer when his back-flung hand brought down the bar.

Landon is a distinct contrast to Brown and may seem to French spectators an *objet pour rire*—until they see him jump. In his athletic kit he looks to be enjoying the poorest of health. He was born at Salisbury, Conn., U.S.A., on November 20th, 1898, stands 5ft. 9¾in., and weighs only 9½ stone. He began jumping at the Hotchkiss Preparatory School in 1916, and a year later was clearing 5ft. 8in. In the autumn of 1917 he entered Yale University and came under the care of America's premier field events coach, the late J. J. Mack. Until 1922 his successes were phenomenal; then he fell ill, but during the winter he re-entered competition and established a new world's Indoor High Jump Record of 6ft. 5¼in. Last year he was ill again, but in the autumn set up a new Metropolitan A.A.U. record of 6ft. 4in.

Landon gives but little attention to

training other than a small amount of practice before meetings and a great amount of walking.

Great Britain's only hope was that B. Howard Baker, the amateur Association Football International and Chelsea goalkeeper, would come back into training. Baker won his first English High Jump Championship in 1912; has represented us twice already at the Olympic Games, and was unfortunate at Antwerp, where he was defeated by Landon, upon whom he turned the tables in London a fortnight later. At Huddersfield in 1921 he set up a new British record of 6ft. 5in., and even now he is the most likely man to beat the Americans, for his general fitness is still as great as ever.

South Africa has a good man in L. F. Roberts, and the Indian Empire another in C. T. Van Geyzel, both of whom are at Cambridge, where they tied recently in a High Jump competition at 6ft. 1½in.

CHARLES PADDOCK.

(Sprinter.)

Charles Paddock was America's great discovery just before the last Olympiad, and like so many of her best athletes hails from California, where he was educated at the Southern University.

As I saw him first at Antwerp in 1920, he was a short, stocky fellow, whose running action was not any more pleasing than that of Eric Liddell. At that time he was a great believer in omens, and would run no race until he had sprinted fifty yards down the track and crossed his hands one over the other twice on a piece of wood at the side. He always finishes his race with a great jump for the tape.

Neither of the Olympic sprint races was satisfactory to Paddock at Antwerp. In the 100 Metres final, which he won, the starter got his field away abominably badly, so that Edward (Great Britain), Murchison (U.S.A.), and Ali Khan (France) were all left on their knees. In the semi-final of the 200 Metres Edward pulled a thigh muscle, and he, incidentally, was considered Paddock's most dangerous opponent at both distances. In the final at the longer distance Paddock was beaten by the U.S.A. Naval officer, Allan Woodring.

CHARLES PADDOCK
(America).

In 1921 Paddock went in for a perfect orgy of record-breaking, and succeeded in sweeping the board at both metric and yards distances from 90 Yards in 8 3-5sec. to 300 Metres in 33 1-5sec. His best time for 100 Metres is 10 2-5sec., and for 200 Metres 21 1-5sec.

He is a generous soul, and lately has been training Eddie Sudden, of Stanford University, who, he says, must be the greatest sprinter ever, and will some day break up all his own records.

Last year Paddock quarrelled with the American Athletic Union, who forbade any American Olympic athlete to compete abroad prior to the next Games. But Paddock wanted to take part in the International Universities' Meet at Paris in May last year, and he did so; hence he has been under sentence of suspension by the governing body, but an *amende honorable* has been arranged and we shall probably see him in Paris.

Olympic record for 100 Metres stands at 10 3-5sec., made by D. E. Lippincott, U.S.A., at Stockholm, 1912. Great Britain's best man at this distance is probably E. H. Liddell, Edinburgh University, who last year won the A.A.A. Championship in 9 7-10sec., which, on an ordinary timekeeper's watch, equals Paddock's world's record of 9 3-5sec. Unfortunately the 100 Metres heats will be held on a Sunday in Paris, and Liddell's religious scruples will prevent him from taking part. In his absence from the race we shall rely upon H. M. Abrahams, W. P. Nichol, a young Nottingham schoolmaster, and Tom Matthewman, from Huddersfield, the Northern Champion: both the latter have shown 9 4-5sec. for 100 Yards.

The Olympic 200 Metres (218.72 yards) record stands at 21 3-5sec., made by Archie Hahn, U.S.A., at St. Louis, in 1904. Paddock has beaten this time. Liddell's 21 3-5sec. for 220 Yards at the A.A.A. Championships last year is also better than the Olympic record. In this event the Scottish crack will be our best hope. He was far from a polished runner last year, but it well may be that he will give us a new world's record at Paris.

AUSTRALASIA

Although Australasia has always taken a keen interest in the Games, the Dominion has yet to find an athlete to win premier honours in the track or field events. This year they are sending to Paris a select team of half-a-dozen stars, who may be expected to figure prominently. Of these the name of E. W. Carr, of the East Sydney A.C., suggests itself as that of the man most likely to earn winning brackets.

E. W. CARR.
(Sprinter.)

"Slip" Carr, who recently held an appointment at Australia House, in London, won the 220 Yards Imperial Race at the British Legion Rally last year in 22 1-5sec., and has won the three events—100, 220, and 440 Yards in one day in New South Wales. Last year he ran the 100 yards in 9 4-5sec., but was beaten by inches in the New Zealand Championship in the same time by M. Kirksey, one of America's most prominent sprinters. Carr has also to his credit the Australian record of 21½sec. for 220 Yards. At the Gothenburg Games last July he won the 200 Metres in 21 9-10sec., which, although not quite equal to the Olympic record, would have been good enough to win the 200 Metres at Antwerp. His best time for 100 metres is 10 9-10sec. Carr has not the reputation of Paddock nor the records of Liddell behind him, but his possibilities of securing an Olympic Gold Medal this month may be assessed as those of a very good outsider.

E. W. CARR
(Australasia).

SOUTH AFRICA

This year South Africa will put into the field the strongest Olympic team the Union has ever had. This is largely due to the general interest in athletics which was aroused last year by the visit of a team of Oxford University athletes to the country.

In H. Kinsman and G. G. Dustan, South Africa has two sprinters who have proved themselves sound even timers at 100 yards and something better at 220 yards. Dustan, indeed, has equalled South African record of 9 4-5sec. for the short distance and established a new national record of 21 4-5sec. for 220 Yards. Of the rest of the team, C. W. Oldfield has returned 1min. 57sec. for the Half Mile, and S. J. M. Atkinson 15sec. for 120 Yards Hurdles and 23ft. 4¾in. for the Broad Jump.

On these performances Atkinson appears to be slightly better than Great Britain's Hurdling cracks, F. R. Gaby and L. F. Partridge, who ran almost a dead heat in the A.A.A. Championship last year in 15 1-5 sec. The South African is certainly the equal of our best Long Jumper, H. M. Abrahams, although neither of them is in the same class as the American Negroes, Hubbard and Gourdin.

His countrymen also have great hopes that Atkinson will do a big performance in the 400 Metres Low Hurdles, but he will have to find a lot of running if he is to be in the same class with Ivan H. Riley, the U.S.A. Champion, who last year at the Pre-Olympic Carnival Wilco Games set up a new American record of 54 3-5sec. for 400 Metres Hurdles.

Perhaps South Africa's most interesting representative will be the schoolboy phenomenon, L. B. B. Betts, who is said to be a better edition of the world's champion, Reggie Walker, who also hailed from Africa.

L. B. B. BETTS.
(Runner.)

Betts, who is head prefect and captain of games at the Jeppe High School, Johannesburg, will be twenty years of age by the time he arrives at Paris to take part in the Games. As a schoolboy of eighteen he covered 100 yards in 9 4-5sec., thus equalling South African record. In 1922 he took the Transvaal Inter-High-School 100 Yards Championship in even time, the Half Mile in 2min. 2 3-5sec., and for the Quarter set up an unofficial South African record of 48 2-5sec. He did the "hat trick" again last year and, incidentally, recorded 9 4-5 sec. for the 100 Yards and 2min. 0 1-5sec. for the Half Mile, which is a new Transvaal Inter-School record.

Later last year he represented the Combined Universities of South Africa against Oxford and won the Quarter Mile in 48 3-5

sec. These figures were accepted as the official South African record.

During the last year Betts, who is a dark, thick-set, merry youngster, has put on a stone and a half in weight and his performances are better than ever. The Quarter Mile is probably his best event. He was absolutely fresh after putting up his record at the distance, and there is every chance that he will beat 48sec. when he has someone to pull him out.

At the Games one of his most dangerous opponents will be W. E. Stevenson, U.S.A., who came to Oxford University, after winning the American 440 Yards Championship of 1921 in 48 2-5sec., with the reputation of a record breaker. Stevenson was outgeneralled by H. M. Abrahams in the Oxford and Cambridge Sports, an experience which put him right on his mettle for the A.A.A. Championships, when, in 49 3-5sec., he beat G. M. Butler by 2ft. on an overcrowded track. Butler himself should be another source of danger to Betts. In 1919 he won the A.A.A. title in 49 4-5sec., and at Antwerp ran second to B. G. D. Rudd (South Africa) in the 400 Metres (437.45 yards) in 49 3-5 sec. Then there is Allan Woodring, U.S.A., who won the 200 Metres at Antwerp and has touched 48sec. for 440 yards recently.

On the other hand, Betts, like his predecessor Rudd, may prove equally great at the Half Mile. At this distance he has never yet been extended, but has indeed always had to save himself for a hard Quarter Mile later in the same afternoon.

L. B. B. BETTS
(South Africa).

FINLAND

Finland is a country which has come comparatively recently into International athletics. A few Finns took part in the 1908 London Olympic Games. They scored no premier honours, but they did better in taking to heart the lesson which we, with our plethora of track runners, have so persistently ignored. This lesson was that the nation that wants to win in International competition must make itself equally good at all the events that constitute the programme, and not rely solely on the best material chance and local customs may have made available. The Finns discovered that the whole of the old athletic world was gradually concentrating on the spectacular sprints and middle races up to a mile, to the utter neglect of such field events as throwing and jumping and the gradual decay of long-distance running.

At the Stockholm Olympiad in 1912, Finnish athletes secured a large number of points in the field events and won the 5,000 and 10,000 Metres track events and the Cross Country race. At Antwerp in 1920 this little nation had so vastly improved that its team with 95 points came second to the United States, 210 points, leaving Sweden third with 90 points and Great Britain fourth with 80 points. Since then the sight of the Finns' close-cropped, bullet heads and the familiar light blue vests bearing the Finnish flag on the breast has been a signal everywhere to other athletes to give of their best if they want to win.

This year the probability is that America, Great Britain, the Dominions, and Sweden will be so evenly matched on the track that Finland with her solid phalanx of field events men and unbeatable distance runners will score the winning points at the VIIIth Olympiad. It is a significant fact that the majority of the men who will represent that country have already either broken world's records or gone within an ace of so doing.

PAAVO NURMI.*
(Runner.)

Paavo Nurmi is fairly heavily built, quite tall enough for a distance runner, and covers close on 9ft. at every stride. He was under twenty years of age when he first came into prominence, just prior to the VIIth Olympiad, and at that time was far short of his best form. He is an athlete of

* N.B.—Since the following facts and figures were compiled, Nurmi, in the course of a cross-country race at Abo, sustained a serious knee injury which must interrupt his Olympic training for some weeks.—*Author.*

dogged perseverance and the most amazing versatility. Although he won the Finnish Championships at 1,500 and 5,000 Metres in July, 1920, and has since broken world's record at both 1,500 metres and one mile, it was at that time thought that the longer distances would suit him best. This idea was further fostered at Antwerp later that same July.

At the VIIth Olympiad he did not compete in the 1,500 Metres, was beaten by Guillemot at 5,000 Metres, but turned the tables upon the Frenchman at 10,000 Metres. In their first race the Frenchman out-generalled the Finn and beat him by a long-sustained burst of speed in the last lap of the 5,000 Metres. The time was 14min. 55 3-5sec. In the 10,000 Metres Nurmi left no margin for a second mistake, and the pace was such that Guillemot had not the vestige of a sprint left in him at the end of the longer race, which Nurmi won in 31min. 45 4-5sec.

In 1922 Nurmi came to England and won the Four Miles A.A.A. Championship in 19min. 52 1-5sec. The following afternoon he beat the best of our steeplechase runners how he liked over a two-mile course in 11min. 11 1-5 sec. The time is not, however, as good as that shown by Great Britain's Olympic record holder, Percy Hodge, at Antwerp, in 1920.

With Willie Ritola to relieve him in the 10,000 Metres and possibly the 5,000 Metres also, it is certain that Nurmi will compete in the Olympic 1,500 Metres, at which distance he is now pre-eminent, and it is quite possible that he may prefer the Steeplechase to the 5,000 Metres. His versatility is well shown by the world's records he holds, which are given below :—

1921	One Mile	4min. 13 9-10sec.
	Six Miles	29min. 41 1-5sec.
	10,000 Mets. (6 miles 376¼ yards)	30min. 40 1-5sec.
1922	2,000 Mets. (2,187.4 yards)	5min. 26 3-10sec.
	5,000 Mets. (5,468.11 yards)	14min. 26 3-10sec.
	Three Miles	14min. 8 4-5sec.
1923	1,500 Mets. (1,640.43 yards)	3min. 53sec.
	One Mile	4min. 10 2-5sec.
	3,000 Mets. (1 mile 1,520 yards)	8min. 27 4-5sec.

Nurmi's 1,500 metres form will no doubt have the greatest interest for British people ; since, to us, the one mile is the classic athletic distance. His time for 1,500 metres is 3 4-5sec. better than the Olympic record, set up by the great Oxonian, A. N. S. Jackson, at Stockholm, in 1912, and, moreover. when Nurmi broke the world's one mile record he did so by the very comfortable margin of 2 1-5sec.

PAAVO NURMI
(Finland).

Despite Nurmi's wonderful records Great Britain, America, and Sweden all have hopes of gaining a gold medal for the 1,500 Metres at Paris. H. B. Stallard, of Cambridge University, was but narrowly beaten in the English Mile Championship of 1921, when A. G. Hill reduced the British record to 4min. 13 4-5sec. On that occasion Stallard's time was 4min. 14 1-5sec. America's hope will be little Joie Ray, whose stride measures no more than 7ft. He has held the One Mile American Championship title for eight out of the last nine years, and has 4min. 13 4-5sec. to his credit. E. Wide, who represents Sweden, is a recent discovery; big, blonde, and an 8½ft. strider, he has already run 1,500 metres in 3min. 56 7-10sec., which is just a fraction inside Strode Jackson's Olympic record.

When Wide was beaten by Nurmi in world's record time for one mile last year the Swede returned 4min. 13 1-10sec., but none of these performances need alarm us, for times are notoriously fast in Sweden on account of the rarefied air and the very fast track at Stockholm.

WILLIE RITOLA.
(Distance Runner.)

Willie Ritola, the distance runner of the Finnish-American Athletic Club, and holder of the American National Ten Miles and Cross Country Championships, was until quite recently regarded as the United States'

Olympic hope at the long distances. He has, however, decided to return to his native land, from which he has been absent upwards of ten years. Although Ritola has been a runner from his earliest days, and as a boy was well coached in Finland, he did not make his first competitive appearance in America until 1918. During the last two years he has developed into the nation's most consistent long-distance runner. In addition to capturing the championships above mentioned for the last two years, Ritola gained additional fame by three indoor record-breaking performances last winter. In one of these he defeated Joie Ray in a stirring 5,000 Metres race, but the American one mile champion reversed the decision two weeks later when he lowered that particular record to 14min. 54sec. That they will meet again at Paris and at the same distance is highly probable. Ritola's other records, which remain unbroken, were for the three and four miles races, which he ran in 14min. 15 4-5sec. and 19min. 27 4-5sec. respectively.

WILLIE RITOLA
(Finland).

America's disappointment at Ritola's decision to return home is easy to understand. He has been resident in the States for ten years, and had already taken out first citizenship papers when it appeared that it might not be possible for him to obtain final papers prior to the Olympic Games this month. This circumstance would, of course, have rendered him ineligible to represent America at the Olympiad. The addition of Ritola will enormously strengthen Finland's team, and he will compete in the 5,000 and 10,000 Metres runs and the 3,000 Metres team race.

In the individual races Ritola might possibly be beaten by either Nurmi or Ray at 5,000 metres, but at the longer distance he is likely to have the field to himself. British hopes for the distance events centre round H. Britton and E. Harper, of 10 miles championship fame. The Olympic records at 5,000 metres, 14min. 36 3-5sec., and 10,000 metres, 31min. 20 4-5sec., were made by Hannes Kolehmainen, at Stockholm, in 1912.

HANNES KOLEHMAINEN
(Finland).

HANNES KOLEHMAINEN.
(Marathon Runner.)

Hannes Kolehmainen comes of a running family and has been at it all his life. Our first introduction to him was in 1911, when he won the English A.A.A. Four Miles Championship in 20min. 3 3-5sec. He was then under twenty years of age, and had yet to beat the great French record-breaker Jean Bouin. This he did at the Stockholm Olympic Games a year later, when he set up new Olympic records at 5,000 and 10,000 metres, and was also first man home in the cross country race. In those days he was a little chap with fair silky hair and skin bronzed by much open-air training. He was and still is compactly built, and to see him running is to realize the meaning of the poetry of motion. After the Stockholm Olympiad Kolehmainen went out to America, where he followed a record-breaking career at all distances up to the full Marathon course of 26 miles 385 yards.

In 1919 he returned to Finland to train with his countrymen, and it was decided that as the 5,000 and 10,000 Metres could be left safely to his compatriot, Paavo Nurmi, Kolehmainen should be kept for the Marathon. That was a fortunate choice for Finland and surely the crown of Kolehmainen's wonderful career. After running ten miles of the heavy, cobbled roads around Antwerp, he took the lead,

and although Lossman, a big, burly Esthonian, dogged his footsteps and finished only half a lap behind him, the little Finn was never headed after he took the lead. His time for 26 miles 1,211yds. was 2hrs. 32min. 34 4-5sec., and that of Lossman, 2hrs. 32min. 48sec., both beating the previous Olympic record. In the recent U.S.A. trials the veteran C. de Mar, who ran at Stockholm in 1912, returned 2hrs. 29min. 40 1-5sec.

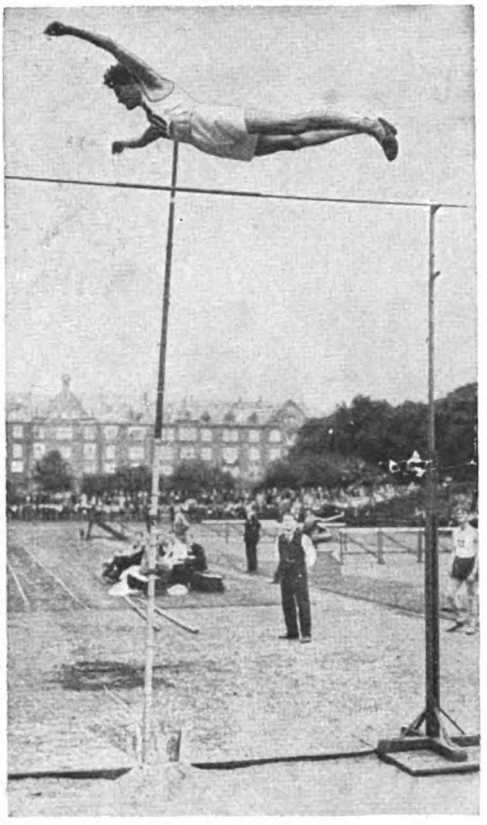
Kolehmainen has aged considerably in appearance since he returned from America, and is more than a trifle bald, but in the "middle thirties," as he is, he is one of the running marvels of the world. His principal world's records, established in 1920 and 1922, are 20,000 metres (12 miles 752yds.), 1hr. 7min. 33 1-5sec.; 25,000 metres (15 miles 940yds.), 1hr. 25min. 19 9-10sec.; 30,000 metres (18 miles 1,128yds.), 1hr. 47min. 13 3-10sec.

It may be that youth will be served this year and that Lossman, of Esthonia, who won the Marathon race at the Gothenburg Games, will reverse the Antwerp decision at Paris, or de Mar beat them both; but the Finns do not think it possible that Kolehmainen will be beaten. Great Britain's best man for this event is undoubtedly the young Lincolnshire farmer, A. R. Mills, who in 1920 won the *Sporting Life* Marathon Race from Windsor to London (26 miles 385yds.) in 2hrs. 37min. 40 2-5sec. Mills was victorious again in 1921 and 1922, but his chances of taking higher honours at Paris than he did at Antwerp, where he was placed thirteenth to Kolehmainen, depend entirely on his inclination and ability to undergo a proper course of training for this most strenuous of all athletic events.

NORWAY

CHARLES HOFF.
(Pole Jumper.)

Norway's hope at the Olympic Games will be Charles Hoff, of Christiania. He is now twenty-three years of age, and by profession an artist. For years 12½ft. was regarded as the absolute limit of a pole vaulter's capabilities, then the Americans made 13ft. seem possible, and at Antwerp in 1920 Frank Foss, U.S.A., actually cleared 13ft. 5in. Charles Hoff, who is a tall, rather weedy-looking youth, with long black hair and a sleepy manner, has brought even 14ft. within the range of probabilities. At Gothenburg last July he accomplished 13ft. 9 3-5in., but the record was not accepted by the I.A.A.F. Records Committee, as the performance was done in an exhibition jump after the actual six attempts allowed in competition. But Hoff was not disheartened, and at Copenhagen at the end of July did slightly better by clearing 13ft. 9¾in. It is interesting to note that in 1922 Hoff won the English A.A.A. Pole Vault Championship at 12ft. and the Long Jump Championship at 23ft. 3in., and was second to Ville Tuulos in the Hop, Step, and Jump. He is also a fine hurdler and quite in the first flight of sprinters at 200 metres.



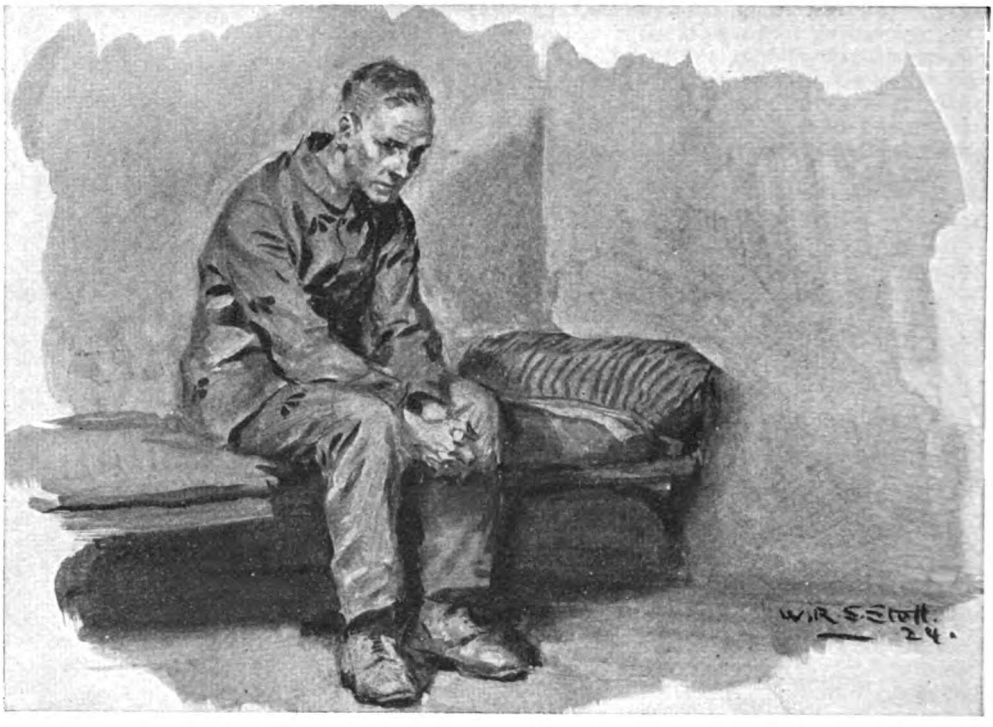
CHARLES HOFF
(Norway).

ITALY

Italy has in Ugo Frigerio a phenomenal walker, and in A. Valerio a Marathon runner of no mean order, since he finished third to Kolehmainen at Antwerp.

At Antwerp the very youthful Frigerio, who hails from Milan, won the 10,000 and 3,000 Metres walks, in both of which events the world's record holder, G. Rasmussen (Denmark), was disqualified. After winning the English Three Miles Championship in 1922, Frigerio was received by the King of Italy, who, it is said, is keenly interested in his subject's chances at Paris.

Photographs by Sport and General and Topical Press.



THE DARK CORRIDOR

BY

STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY W.R.S.STOTT

AT the sound of that familiar click the mind of Raymond Calverley instinctively registered the phrase, "The last time!"

When the cell door was opened again he would be free. The price would have been paid. Till now he had hardly dare visualize this moment. There had been whole days, whole nights, whole years, when he could not persuade himself that it would ever come to pass. He felt sick with agitation. He sat upon the bed and buried his face in his hands. Free; really, really free! In a few hours more he would be facing the outside world. There was something terrifying in the thought—facing the unknown. His sympathies quickened towards some of those old prison "lags" who, after serving twenty years or so, preferred prison life. It was in any case familiar and understandable. The outside world to them was completely bewildering. They didn't know how to cope with it.

But he—he was only forty-six, and he had only served five years and three months. Only! Five years and three months! Five thousand years and three hundred months. There had been moments during the first year when he thought he would go mad, when half an hour seemed like an eternity, and he would think:—

"That's half an hour. Now there's to be another half-hour. Then another and another, and then eventually a whole day and a whole night. Then all over again and

Copyright, 1924, by Stacy Aumonier.

again and again, till a week passes. Then all over and over and over again till a month passes. Then the seasons change. It will be winter again and then summer, and then winter again and then summer, and so on and on and on five times. And I'm changing all the time. The outside world is changing. All the things I desire are cut off from me. I shall never endure it. Oh, God ! "

But he had endured it. The reality had come to pass. Of all the manifestations of Nature, that which is called human is the most adaptable. As the years passed he found himself adapting himself to prison life, creating a life within a life. There were times when he even persuaded himself that he was happy. This was largely the outcome of a sense of physical well-being. Prison life had suited him. He had been forced to work out in the open several hours a day, on the farms and in the quarries, fourteen hundred feet above the sea on Dartmoor. The air itself was a tonic. He had been plainly but adequately fed. He had to retire for the night at five o'clock. He had been cut off from alcohol, which had been partly the cause of his undoing. During the last two years he had been allowed to smoke for half an hour twice a day, but that was all. Everything was regular, ordered, and methodical. He had no responsibility. He was physically fit, much fitter than he had been at any time since he left school. For part of the time he had worked in the carpenter's shop. He had come to like the smell of wood, and the sense of creating something which was going to be used. There had been odd moments when the whole atmosphere of the prison seemed friendly and satisfying. Some little concession would be magnified into a great act of kindness. He had had opportunities for reading, and greater ones for reflecting. And his dominant reflection had been : " I must so manage my mind that I do not eternally regard myself as a criminal." His struggle for self-respect had been acute. To foster this he took all the trouble he could with his personal appearance. A wise provision of recent years allows the convict a safety-razor and the liberty to wear his hair as he likes. Raymond took advantage of this. He shaved every day, and brushed his grey locks carefully, sometimes lubricating them with a little of His Majesty's butter ! His skin was tanned with sun and wind. He would return to the outside world a better specimen physically. But mentally and morally ? Here were greater difficulties. His mind said : " I was guilty. I let things drift. I was weak and foolish. I saw an opportunity to make a great sum of money easily. I was dishonest. I was found out. They punished me. I have paid the price. To this extent I am purged. I see things more clearly now. I shall not be dishonest again. I have no desire to be. I have lost the desire in the same way that I have lost the desire for alcohol. I just want my chance to be a decent citizen again. But will they let me ? What will be their attitude towards me ? Above all—how can I face my son ? "

At this point in his reflections he would groan aloud, for his son was the mainspring of his life.

Raymond had been an importer of chemicals, with offices in Fenchurch Street. At the age of twenty-two he had married the daughter of a wealthy shipbroker. After their first passionate attachment he and his wife found that their interests did not dovetail. Had it not been for the son who was born the following year, it is possible that they would have agreed to separate. Not that there was any serious breach between them ; it was simply that familiar cleavage caused by little things. It took years to discover that they had little in common, and when the discovery was made each prepared to make the best of it —not an unusual marital position. They had remained on perfectly friendly terms, and it was only over the upbringing of the boy that they came into conflict, and even then the contest was conducted without bitterness.

His wife was a Society woman, with Society interests. She rode, hunted, played golf, took the waters at fashionable places abroad, went to church, and backed horses. Raymond liked books, and rambling in the country, and that society spelt with a small " s " which one meets in country inns or London taverns. When his wife condescended to come to London they shared the same house, but they made all their arrangements independently by mutual consent.

With his wife usually abroad and his son at college, Raymond would have led a lonely life in the large house in Russell Square. Only there are clubs. He belonged to several, and he was a good clubman. Many considered him an ideal clubman, being genial, lavishly hospitable, and a good raconteur. He drifted into the habit of lunching in clubs, dining in clubs, and calling at clubs between meals. Like many men of his kind, without being a drunkard, he drank considerably too much, in the sheer exuberance of social intercourse. He could afford to be generous, as his business was successful and his wife had a large private fortune of her own. But one day he was tricked by some Argentine gentlemen and lost a very large sum of money over

a deal in nitrates. The bitterness of this acted upon him disastrously. He was worried by the complications arising from it, and he drowned his distress in the accustomed way. He visited more clubs, and pubs. And unfortunately in one of these expeditions he met Max Rawle. Max was one of those people of no determinate age, nationality, or profession, who nevertheless seem to embody all the vices of every age, nation, and profession, and to wrap up the same in a cloak of irresistible charm. He was a natural swindler. People knew he was going to swindle them, and they couldn't help it. They would even forgive him after the deed was done, so plausible and charming was he.

And under the influence of Max Rawle, Raymond became as clay in the hands of the potter. They lunched and dined together, played billiards, and went to night clubs. Max was a brilliant talker, and had lived in strange lands and mixed with strange people.

The trouble occurred soon after he and his wife had disagreed about whether Ralph should go up to Oxford or Cambridge. As usual, she had had her way, and Ralph had gone up to Cambridge. Kathleen went off to Biarritz and had no intention of returning till the end of the term. Raymond followed the easy path and found himself getting into debt and his moral fibre slackening. He was too proud to apply to his wife for money, and one mad evening Max dangled before him the lure of a mighty opportunity. It could hardly fail. So ingenious and simple did the scheme appear, Raymond was astonished that it had never occurred to anyone before. It concerned the transference of certain blocks of interests backwards and forwards between two different companies at the opportune moment, thus giving an inflated appearance to both. It hardly seemed dishonest in the way that Max devised it. They were to go shares. But a few days after he had completed his part of the bargain Max had disappeared, and nothing had been seen of him since. Raymond was left in the air. He was unable to explain his position. A long and involved commercial trial resulted in his being condemned to seven years' penal servitude for fraud. With a good conduct record this had been reduced to five years and three months.

BUT how was he to face his son? His wife had taken the matter better than he had anticipated. She had even written to him regularly every three months, formal little letters about the boy and family affairs. She had upbraided him for his not appealing to her when in financial straits, and had hinted that she would set him on his feet again when released. The boy had written him chatty schoolboyish letters ignoring his father's crime. He had been spending his time partly with his mother, who had settled abroad, and partly with a tutor in a remote village in Suffolk. His son! Raymond would lie in his cell bed at night and groan. He would think of the boy at all the stages of his life. When he was a toddler and would lie in his arms, when he began to lisp and talk. When he would run to him and throw his arms around him. He could hear the sound of that baby voice: "Daddy! daddy!" And then he had taught him all the simple things, and Ralph went to school. How proud he had been when the boy came home and asked his advice and help! He would see the little sturdy figure come swinging along the street, a satchel strapped over his scarlet jersey. His handsome, eager face would light up with pleasure when he saw his father. And they would go for walks together, holding hands, and talking about birds, and trees, and games. And the boy loved and respected him. He also loved and respected his mother, and he could not understand any differences between them. And so the parents compromised and patched up a union of sorts; but they had been jealous of each other. Raymond had loved to watch the unfolding of the boy's mind.

When the crash had come and he had stood in the dock at the Old Bailey, and listened to the suave voice of the judge condemning him to seven years' imprisonment, there had flashed before his mind the image of Ralph's eager young face, exclaiming:—

"What's all this about, dad?"

The boy would never believe he was a criminal. He simply could not understand. It had not been indeed a simple case to understand. He had been able to make the excuse, but not the defence, that he himself did not understand. He had muddled things up, signed the wrong papers. The excuse satisfied the boy, of course. But the law is more explicit. The law gave him every opportunity, left him every loophole, but was relentless in the logic of its ordered facts.

But since that tragic day the boy had had five years to study those facts. He had come to man's estate. People would have told him and explained to him, doubtless made things as unpleasant as possible—some of them. And he would have *wanted* to know—oh, so eagerly! He would not be likely to exclaim now:—

"What's all this about, dad?"

Even his voice would have changed. Oh, God!

He dozed fitfully until the morning light crept between the prison bars, when, strangely enough, he slept soundly, only to be awakened by the familiar click of the cell door.

"The last time!"

He dressed carefully, washed, and had his breakfast. He was led to a room where he filled up many forms. The sight of his own familiar suit brought a lump to his throat. It was like the first contact with the outside world. There was much clanking of chains and keys. Crossing the yard in charge of a warder, he passed a working party on its way to the farrier's. All of the convicts were familiar to him. Many of them would be there for ten years or more, and in two minutes he would be free! He shuffled along feeling a little ashamed, as though he were taking something from them which they had a right to share. As they neared the outer gate, the warder, a fat, elderly person of the old school, said:—

"Well, good luck, son!"

He gasped at this unexpected friendly gesture, and could not reply. A great wave of pity flooded him, pity—oh, for all the world.

The iron gate opened. He stepped through into the sunshine. He heard it click behind him. He was free.

He had half expected someone would meet him at the prison gates. But the street was utterly deserted. His wife knew of the day of his release and she had sent him money, but no hint of where she was or where the boy was. It was like starting life all over again.

He hurried on to Princetown Station. He had a pass to London, and he sat in the corner of the waiting-room. The train did not go for nearly an hour. People regarded him furtively. In Princetown everything is known. Every porter on the station would know that he was a released convict. Nevertheless, that could soon be remedied. London! London would be a sanctuary. The journey up was occupied with dreams. Dreams, and hope and fear, and wild anticipations. Where should he go? His wife had no house now in town, and he didn't know where she was, nor where the boy was. Oh, if he could only find Ralph!

HE arrived at Paddington late in the afternoon, and wandered around the streets adjoining the station. He could not go to a decent hotel without luggage. Everything seemed incredibly noisy and bewildering. Newspaper placards were announcing: "Fall of French Government." How futile and unimportant! At last he found a dingy little hotel in an obscure street, where he engaged a room. He had some tea and wandered the streets again, haunted by the vague idea that he might find Ralph. He went up to the West-end and strolled down Regent Street, Piccadilly, and through Mayfair. At the corner of Jermyn Street he met a man with whom he had done a lot of business in the past, an old club-fellow. He touched his arm and said:—

"Hullo, Frank!"

The man turned and looked at him. An extraordinary scared expression came over his face. His eyes distended, as though he were staring at some strange and dangerous animal. He managed to say:—

"Ho—yes, it's—Calverley, isn't it?"

"Yes. How are you?"

"All right. And you? You—er——"

"Yes, I'm free again."

He tried to smile, but the other man's terrified mien froze the smile upon his lips. His expression seemed to say:—

"How on earth am I to escape from this awful predicament?"

They exchanged a few brief remarks, and parted without any reference to the past or suggestions for the future. As he walked away Raymond winced.

"So that's to be it, is it?" he thought.

The restaurants were crowded with gay diners. If he cared to, he could enter any one of them. He was free. He could mingle with his fellows and buy rich foods and good wines. But he felt no such inclination. It was too late. He was not accustomed to feeding after five o'clock. He did not feel hungry, and drink he knew would upset him. Moreover, his experience with his old business colleague damped his enthusiasm for social life. He might meet others who would treat him in the same way. How could he expect them to know that he was no longer a criminal—that his mind had been purged of its weakness and self-indulgence?

He wandered about till nine o'clock, when a great sense of melancholy and exhaustion overcame him. He went back to his hotel, and to bed. They had given him a room at the end of a dimly-lighted corridor on the second floor. He slept soundly till dawn, when he emerged through a tangled skein of dreams to consciousness. It was as though his own dreams were happy ones, but that they were eternally irrupted by the evil dreams of others. He washed and dressed, and finding that it was too early to obtain breakfast in the hotel, he went out to a coffee-stall. He stood there drinking hot weak coffee and eating hard-boiled eggs, and listening to a slightly inebriated gentleman in evening dress talking to two cabmen

about God. The cabmen were laughing, and the coffee-stall keeper was joining in the argument earnestly. The morning air had a tang of hope and defiance. He took a hand in the argument, and found himself laughing too. In this company he was happy and at home. No one knew him or cared. In the old days of his prosperity he had spent many a happy hour at a coffee-stall. Here was something that had not changed. When the inebriated gentleman and the cabmen had departed he felt fortified to face his day's campaign.

IN the uncertainty of his position he found one tangible spot—his wife's lawyers. They would know of her whereabouts, and probably of Ralph's. He wandered the streets again till ten o'clock, his eyes wistfully seeking, and his heart aching, for his son. At ten o'clock promptly he presented himself at the office of Tidworth, Bates, and Mashie in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was kept waiting three-quarters of an hour before being shown into the office of an elderly, red-faced man, in a white waistcoat, who said curtly :—

" Yes; what is your business."

" I want to know if you can tell me the whereabouts of my wife, Mrs. Raymond Calverley."

The lawyer looked up quickly, his face expressing a kind of greedy morbid interest. It had something of the expression of his business friend of the night before, only less furtive. The lawyer was in no panic to get away. He had power on his side, and he was prepared to take a certain amount of cynical enjoyment out of it. He coughed and said :—

" Oh, so you are Raymond Calverley. Will you please show me your discharge ? I understand that I am to—er—make you a remittance. What is your address ? "

Raymond was patient during the formalities. When they were completed he repeated his first question. The lawyer took a long time to say :—

" I'm afraid I am not empowered by my client to give you any such information."

Damn the man ! Why did he call her " my client " and not " your wife " ? Was the stigma of prison life to rob him for ever of even the social amenities ? Not even to know where she lived ? There flashed through his mind a sudden vision of a night when the nightingale sang in a Devonshire garden, and the swift avowal of love passed from lip to lip. Could love like that die utterly ? Could passion vanish upon the wind, like the skeleton of a dead leaf ? He repeated, inanely :—

" Your client. Your client. I see." Then, with greater vehemence :—

" Perhaps, then, you can give me the address of my son ? "

The lawyer was enjoying the spectacle of his helplessness. He shrugged his shoulders.

" I am afraid I cannot even give you that information."

Raymond saw red.

" Damn you ! " he screamed. " He's my boy. He's as much my boy as hers—more, I tell you. Who the devil are you to hold my son from me ? "

" You are a little unstrung, Mr. Calverley."

" Unstrung ! If you had been five and a quarter years in prison—five thousand years in prison—your heart aching all the time for your only boy—and the day you are released some stranger tells you that he will not tell you where he is—wouldn't you be unstrung ? "

The lawyer replied in dead level tones :—

" I cannot tell where your son is, because —I do not know."

" You do not know ? "

" No, sir, I do not know."

Raymond gave a whine like a dog that has been struck. He groped for his hat upon the table. As he did so his eye alighted on a pile of correspondence. One letter was projecting a little from the rest. It was headed : " Hotel Marguerita, Pau." Just below was the top of a capital D. He recognized it as the way Kathleen formed this letter. His face betrayed no recognition. He stumbled from the room.

He would telegraph to Kathleen on chance. Would she still be there ? The world seemed terribly harsh. His mind was constantly irrupted by visions of Dartmoor, and, strangely enough, they were not unfriendly visions. Dolling, who was serving twelve years for manslaughter, and with whom he had had many whispered chats in the carpenter's shop—Dolling would be missing him. Two young warders, Garrod and Purvis, both had done him innumerable petty services. The moors would be grand under this mottled sky—some queer pull about the place—when you're utterly lonely.

He went to a post-office and sent a telegram to his wife at Pau. He said :—

" Am at Bond's Hotel, Paddington. Where is Ralph ? "

He tried to think of any friend he could go to in the meantime. He reviewed his old life and it seemed to reflect—clubs and pubs ! He could never get into a club again, and pubs did not attract him. The illusory nature of friendships made in this way became clear to him. He would have to go abroad—America, perhaps. If only he could find Ralph !

He waited for three days, and no telegram came from Kathleen. He wandered the

streets and sat in public libraries, reading the newspapers and magazines, and trying to adjust his mind to the current social equation. Human activities as recorded in these productions appeared to him complicated and futile. In the old days he had not seen them in this light. Perhaps he had not troubled to think about them. He had just accepted things as they were. Upon one matter he made up his mind definitely—he would find work. He would not go on accepting his wife's money in this ignominious manner.

On the third day he decided to go down to Ashtree, the village in Suffolk where Ralph spent part of his time with the tutor. It was strange that the boy had made no effort to see him.

He arrived at Ashtree at dusk and left his bag at the local inn. He then asked for the house of Mr. Flanders, the tutor. With considerable difficulty he found it. It was over a mile from the village. His heart was beating violently when he rang the bell.

A servant opened the door.

"Is Mr. Flanders in?"

"Yes, sir; what name?"

"Mr. Calverley."

She looked at him a little queerly, but showed him into a sitting-room. In a few moments a thin, elderly man entered the room. He started at sight of his visitor, and exclaimed:—

"Oh, I thought it was——"

Then he stopped and scrutinized Raymond keenly.

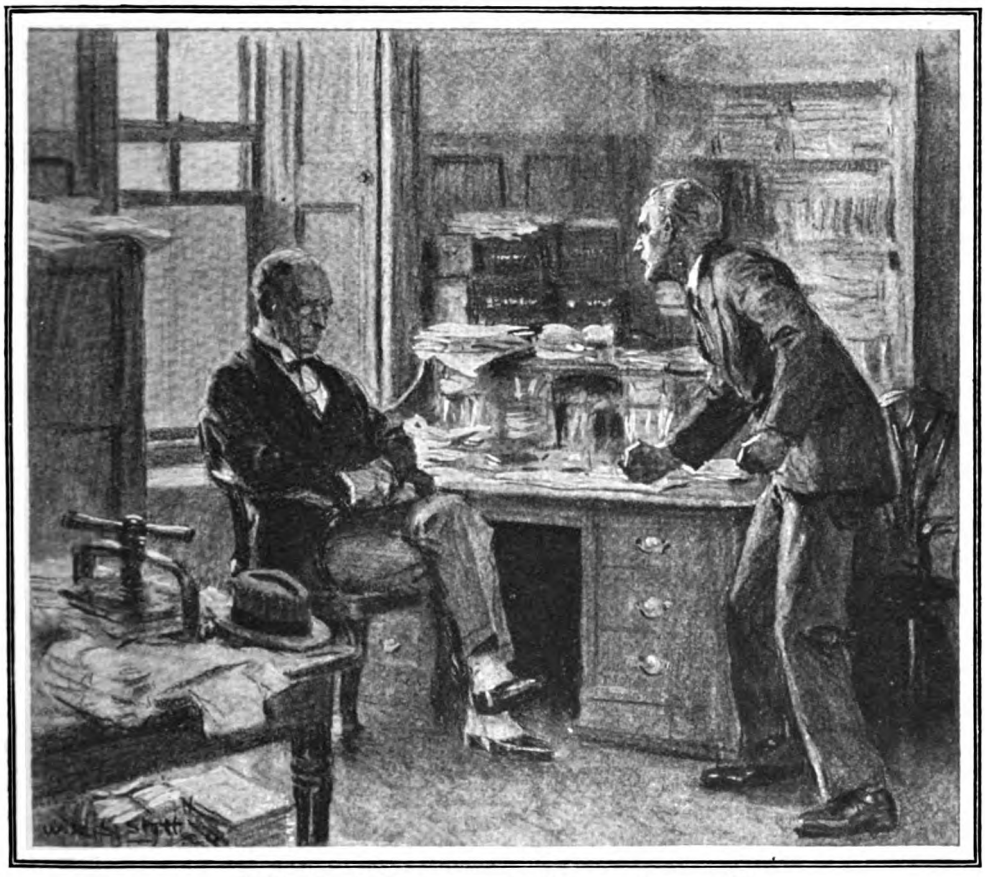
"I came to ask after my son."

The elder man appeared very surprised. He stammered slightly.

"Your son? Your son? Yes. Yes, of course, your son. But he went up to London. He went up to—er—meet you, I understand."

"To meet me! But I haven't seen him. I expected him."

"H'm! Very strange, Mr. Calverley. I'm afraid I can't help you."



"Who the devil are you to hold my son from me?"

This respectable tutor, whom only poverty had driven to accept the tutelage of the son of a convict, was obviously anxious to be rid of the dilemma. With a few formal expressions of regret they parted. Raymond returned to the inn, and found that there was no train back to London that night.

He slept fitfully. What had happened to Ralph? Fear gripped him. He visualized all kinds of terrible things happening to the boy—accidents. The cup and the lip—oh, the grim irony of it! After living that eternity and then on the very day of his release—a skidding car, perhaps, a train smash, a fall. At that moment Ralph might lie groaning in a hospital, calling for him. There was one gleam of brightness in his sombre reflections—Ralph had meant to meet him. The tutor had said that he had gone to London on purpose. Freedom is a fine thing, but love is finer than freedom. Indeed, freedom without love is a negative endurance. Before the dawn broke he had designed plans to find his son. He would inquire at the police-stations and hospitals. He would put an advertisement in the agony column of *The Times*.

And when he arrived in London that was the first thing he did. He inserted :—

"To Ralph Calverley. Am at Bond's Hotel, Paddington. Father."

He then rang up the police-stations and hospitals. No, no one answering to the description of his son had been heard of.

He walked the streets disconsolately. London suddenly became a city of menace and despair. The people appeared hard-featured and cruel, beasts of prey stalking their victims, utterly indifferent to the feelings and passions of each other. The drone of the traffic was like the whirring of some great machine, grinding the bones and blood of men and women into a colourless pulp. He had never felt so lonely in his cell at Dartmoor.

Backwards and forwards between his hotel and the police-station he walked for several days. No answer came to the advertisement in *The Times*.

ONE afternoon, passing down a meagre street off the Edgware Road, he saw a poor bedraggled woman weeping on another's bosom. As he passed he heard her say :—

" They took 'im 'cause 'e was out of work and stole for us. And now they're turning us out—me and the five kids. What are we going to do? Oh, my Gawd! "

And he heard the other woman, who was also poorly but rather flashily dressed—one of the kind who wanders the streets glancing obliquely—he heard her say :—

" Sorl right, Annie, don't you worry. I'll earn money for yer. I'll keep yer goin' till things get brighter."

Without a second's hesitation Raymond dived his hand into his pocket and drew out all the money he had on him, nearly two pounds. He thrust it into the hands of the weeping woman.

" Go on with this, mother," he said, huskily.

The woman stared at him, too amazed to speak. The other said :—

" Hullo, who are you? "

And they looked into each other's eyes, these two, this ex-convict and this woman who wandered the streets glancing obliquely, and the former said :—

" I'm like you. I'm one of the lonely ones."

And he hurried away. Back in his hotel, he went up to his room and sat on the edge of his bed, as he had sat on the edge of his bed in that cell at Dartmoor, pondering, pondering. . . . It was dusk. The working parties would be returning from the quarries. There would be whispered talks together, glints of light from the governor's house, the drone of the organ in the chapel—someone practising for to-morrow's service.

" Lead, Kindly Light,
Amidst the encircling gloom."

Oh, the weariness of it all! the injustice! His heart throbbed to the beat of that haunting melody. In a grey vision he seemed to see an endless procession walking, two and two, to the slow measure of that hymn—all the unhappy in the world, the outcast, and the weak.

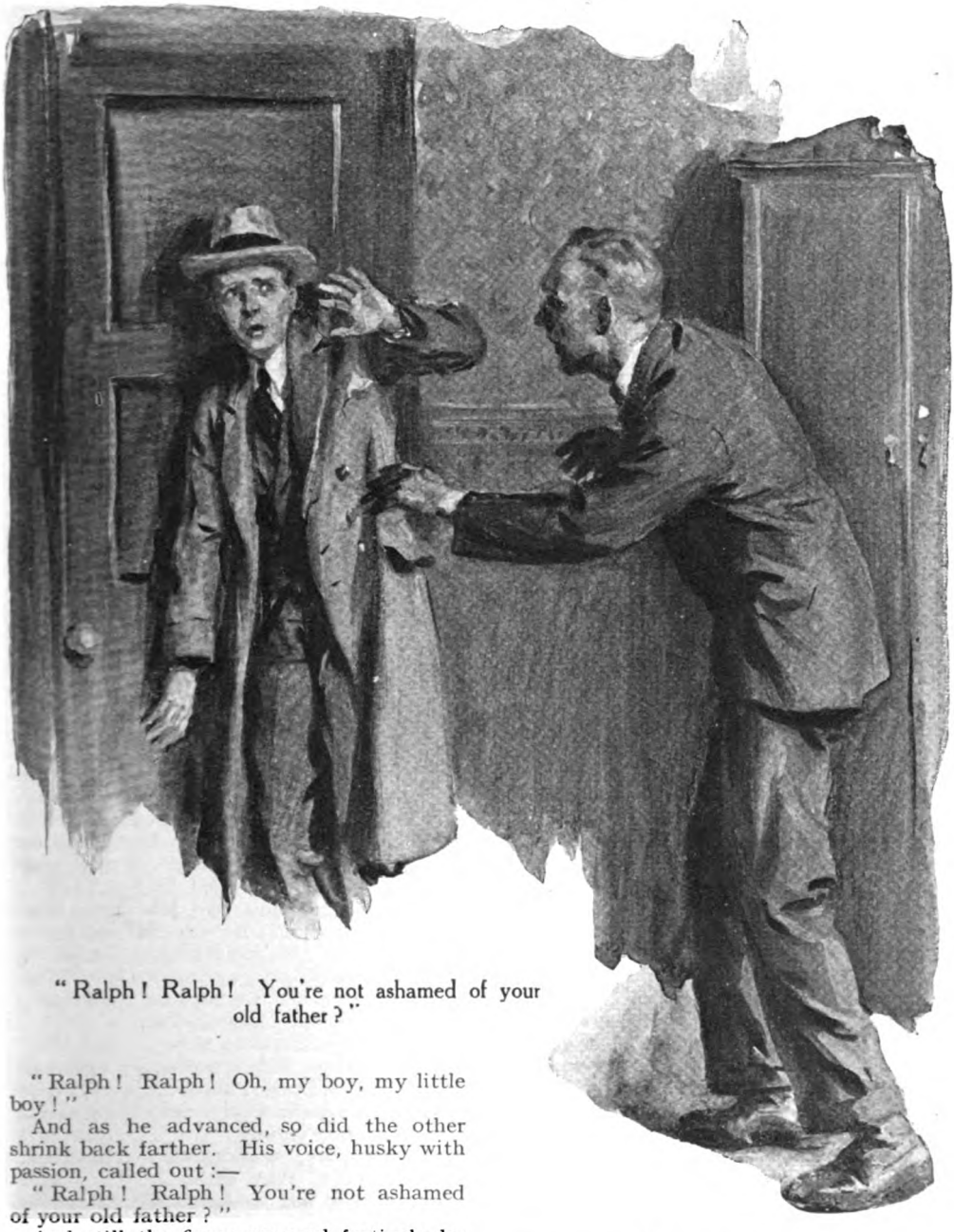
His breast was choked with sobs. He gripped the coverlet of the bed and muttered :—

" Ralph! Ralph! Oh, my boy, my little boy! "

The room grew darker, and outside the traffic still roared relentlessly. He was about to throw himself on the bed when the door opened quietly. A figure glided in and stood with its back to it. He peered forward, and saw a white ghostly face, with hollowed eyes, regarding him fearfully. He tried to stand up, but fell back weakly on the bed. The figure said :—

" Is that you, father? "

He stretched out his hands and groaned. The figure came nearer, and then slunk back again to the door. Raymond forced himself to rise. He beat the air with his arms, as though fearful that there were forces at work trying to keep him from his son.



"Ralph! Ralph! You're not ashamed of your old father?"

"Ralph! Ralph! Oh, my boy, my little boy!"

And as he advanced, so did the other shrink back farther. His voice, husky with passion, called out:—

"Ralph! Ralph! You're not ashamed of your old father?"

And still the figure cowered furtively by the door. He went close up and peered into his son's eyes.

"What is it, Ralph? What's the matter? My God! You look as though it was you who were the criminal and not I!"

The figure still seemed to be warding him off, and the voice said faintly:—

"I am, father. . . . I am."

And then the tension broke. The boy sobbed, and the father held him in his arms at last.

"What is it, Ralph? Tell me. Tell your father, boy. Who should hear of it, if not I?"

"For God's sake, let me sit down. I'm so tired. I've been wandering all night.

I saw your advertisement this morning. And even then I could not make up my mind to come. I'm so ashamed."

"Ashamed! Am I so pure? Am I likely not to forgive—not to understand my son?"

The boy buried his face in his hands and spoke between his fingers.

"I've been living foolishly, father, oh! for years now. Mother spoilt me, gave me lots of money. I got into a funny crowd—betting, drinking, women. She paid my debts again and again. Last Tuesday I came up from Ashtree. I had meant to go down to Dartmoor and meet you at the prison gates. But in the afternoon I met Reggie de Tourneville. He was staying at the Grand Eclipse Hotel. He asked me to dine with him; and then we went up to his room and had a few drinks. Afterwards we went on to some funny joint at Knightsbridge and played cards. There were a crowd of people there and we played baccarat. I won a hundred pounds in about twenty minutes. With the excitement of that and the wine I had drunk, I simply went off the deep end. I thought I couldn't lose. I plunged wildly. I loved the excitement, people watching me, pretty women, you know, and all that kind of thing. Then, of course, I began to lose. My luck varied, but at about one in the morning I had lost four hundred pounds. I hadn't got it in the world. I had borrowed a hundred and fifty from Reggie. I didn't know where mother was. Besides, she had helped me out so often. She had left Pau. I think she was on her way home. I hadn't enough left to pay my hotel bill or the fare down to Dartmoor. I woke up the next morning feeling awful. I wandered about the streets wondering what to do. And then I—I——"

The father's breath was coming in little stabs.

"Yes, Ralph, what did you do, boy?"

"Oh, I mucked the whole day away. I hadn't the courage. It was the next day I did it, the day you came out of prison, and I never met you. Reggie had treated me badly, I think. He wouldn't lend me any more. I'm not sure the whole thing wasn't a plant. They got me there. There were other young chaps, too. Anyway, I kept on thinking of Reggie's room at the Grand Eclipse. When he lent me the money he had gone to a box which he kept locked up in a trunk. It was stuffed with notes. Late in the evening of that day I yielded to temptation. Reggie had gone out to dinner. I went up to one of the clerks downstairs and said, casually:—

"'Key of number 141, please.' You know what those big hotels are. Nobody knows anything about anyone. There are dozens of clerks. He gave me the key. I went up by the stairs and into his room. I forced the lock of the trunk with a poker, but I couldn't force the lock of the box. So I simply wrapped it up in paper and took it away. I took it back to my hotel. Then I borrowed a screw-driver and some pincers. I got it open somehow. Oh, God! what have I done? There were bonds and papers and all kinds of things and nearly three hundred pounds in cash. I never meant to take all that. I just wanted enough to carry on with."

"What have you done with it?" whispered the hoarse voice of the father.

"I've spent some of the money. All the other things I've kept. I left the hotel, of course, and have gone to another one south of the river."

"What was the money in?"

"Treasury notes and fives, tens, and twenties."

"Have you changed any of the big notes?"

"I've changed one ten."

"You fool!"

"Why?"

"They'll trace the number. Where did you change it?"

"At Cook's. I've taken a ticket for Paris to-night."

"Would anybody at the hotel be likely to identify you?"

"That's what I'm not sure. There are over a thousand passing through every day."

"Reggie will suspect you, of course?"

"He's bound to, after what happened. Oh, father, what am I to do? I'm terrified. It means——"

"It was my fault, boy, my crime which led to it. I should have been here to look after you."

"No, no, I've no excuse. I'm finished. And oh, father, I've been so yearning to have you back."

THE young man broke down and wept. Raymond pulled himself up. He paced the room for several minutes in silence. Then he said, tensely:—

"Ralph, boy, go and fetch me that box."

"Fetch it! Why, father?"

"Listen to me carefully. This happened on the night I came out of prison. Fetch me that box. *You* did not steal that box, Ralph."

"What do you mean?"

"These old criminals! It's the same story. It's in the blood. You can do nothing for them. Directly they are released they start all over again—the very same day sometimes. You'll read all this in the papers in two days' time."

He laughed bitterly, and the young man looked up amazed.

"You don't mean to say you'd sacrifice yourself for me like that? Oh, I couldn't let you do it, father."

"Why not? If you strolled into an hotel and asked for a key and got it, why should not I, an old ex-convict? Besides, I am strong now, I could endure it. I have nothing more to live for. Your life is just beginning. But, oh, Ralph, boy, promise me——"

"No, no, no, father. I should go mad with remorse. I couldn't let you—oh!"

HE gave a low scream of fright, for at that moment there was a crisp tap on the door. When the door opened the father was standing as though at attention on parade, the son was cowering against the farther wall. In the doorway stood Kathleen.

They looked at each other, but no one spoke. Then she turned and shut the door quietly, and stood with her back to it. Her face was pale and drawn, and it suddenly flashed through Raymond that in this company of his wife and his son he was the only one who appeared to be of flesh and blood. In the crisis which was about to spring on the three of them, it would be he—the ex-convict—who would have to hold the balance. Strangely enough, she turned to him first, and her voice was gentle. She said:—

"You are free, then, Raymond. I saw your advertisement, and I came to find out what it's all about. I arrived in England an hour ago."

He bowed his head.

"I am free," he answered, "but I'm afraid not for long."

"What do you mean?"

"I have already got into mischief again."

The boy jumped up.

"It's a lie, mother. He is trying to shield me. I stole some money the day he came out, and he wants to make out it was he."

Kathleen's eyes glittered and a tear came into them.

"Ralph! Ralph! don't tell me this is true."

The boy swept to her and flung his arms around her.

"Oh, mother, save me! What am I to do? They'll catch me. I know they'll catch me. I've taken a ticket for Paris, but there'll be a man waiting there. He'll tap me on the shoulder. I've seen it all a hundred times these last few days."

"Why did you do this, Ralph? Have I not helped you before? I prayed to you to be less extravagant, but you know I would have helped you again rather than——"

She buried her face in her hands and wept.

"Oh, dear God! my husband, and then my son, both——"

Raymond went to her and grasped her shoulders.

"Kathleen, it is only through the eyes of suffering that one sees things clearly, and sees them whole. I have suffered and I have learnt to see. It is the life of ease that dulls one and breeds temptation. Give this boy a chance. You have given him everything else, but they have always been the wrong things. Don't let him go to Paris, let him go to where there are great open spaces, and life is a battle to survive. As for this money, what does it matter to me? I have accustomed myself to prison life. I shall be an old 'lag' in time, one who probably prefers prison life to freedom."

A queer expression crept over Kathleen's face as she regarded her husband. She said simply: "You have changed, Raymond."

They were summing up in each other the toll of those five years. His hair had turned quite grey, but his figure was firmer and more erect, his eye clearer, and his skin healthier.

She had become more fragile, her face paler, but she was still a beautiful woman. She turned suddenly to Ralph and said:—

"Whom did you steal this money from?"

"Reggie de Tourneville."

Kathleen started, and her figure appeared to sway.

"Reggie de Tourneville!"

She put her hand to her bosom.

"Wait—wait!" she muttered. "Reggie de Tourneville! Indeed!"

She seated herself and pondered. At last she said:—

"Ralph, do you love your mother?"

"Mother, how can you ask?"

"Kiss me, dear."

Ralph flung his arms around her and kissed her. She sighed contentedly.

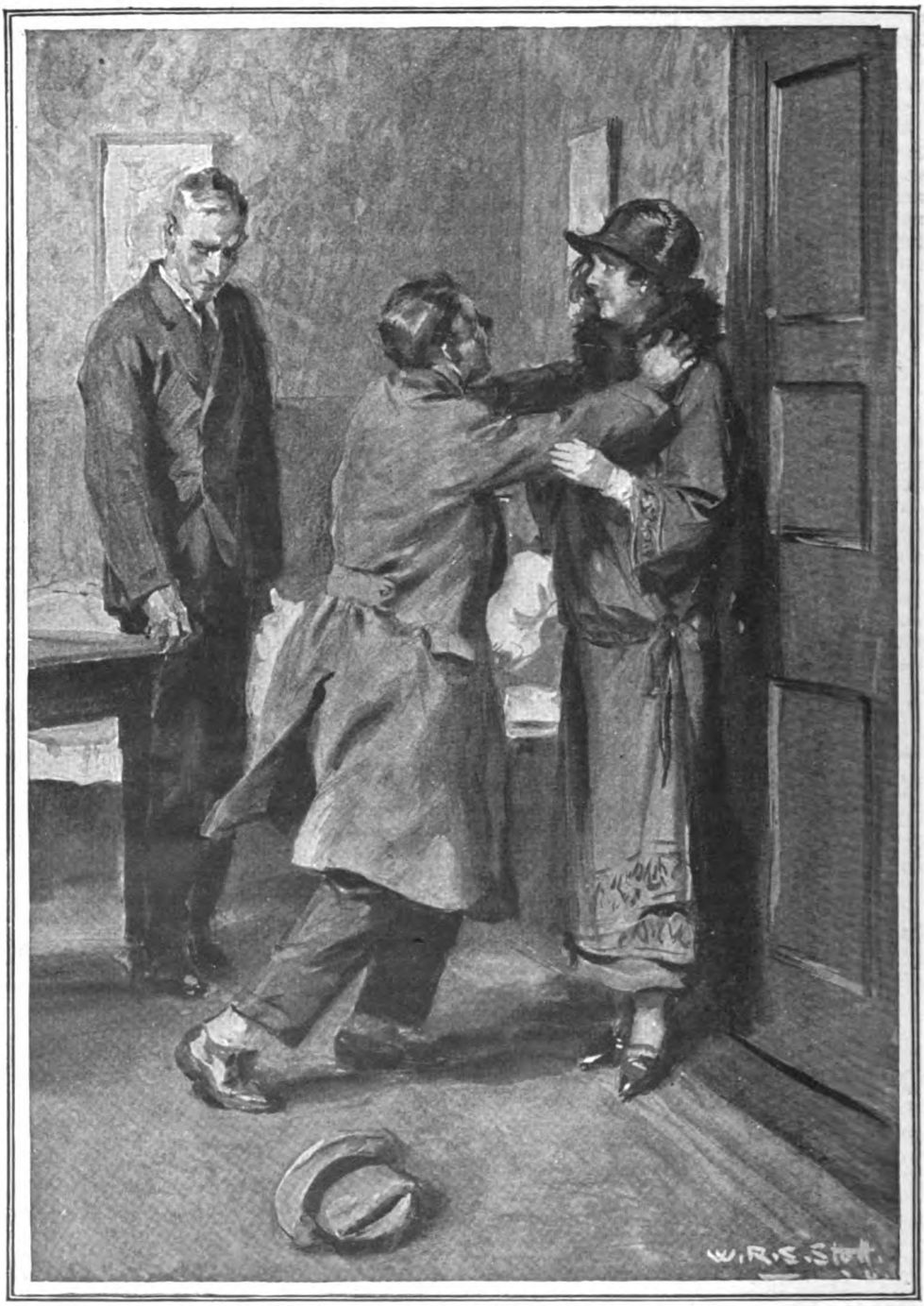
"Now," she said, "you wait here, you two. I know Reggie de Tourneville. I have an idea I can settle this affair with him."

"No, no, mother, you mustn't demean yourself to that swine. He will only snub you, be rude to you."

"I can buy him off. Wait for me. I may be some time. Do not move from this room."

And before they could protest she had gone.

The night was cold, and the wind and rain battered against the window-panes of the little room. Father and son sat, one on



"Oh, mother, save me! What am I to do?"

the bed, the other on a chair, listening and waiting. There seemed to be nothing to say in this fateful interlude, or there was so much to say that their strained voices would make it seem unreal. The boat train to Paris went, and the dinner hour came

and went. It was nine o'clock, and Ralph said :—

" She's a long time, father."

" Yes—yes, she's a long time."

Raymond was indeed restless and nervous, and sometimes he would jump up and pace the room. Ralph lighted a cigarette and offered his father one, but the latter would not take it. The room got colder and colder. At a quarter-past ten there were footsteps in the corridor outside. The door opened and Kathleen stood once more before them. She sat down limply. The boy, his voice sounding reedy and thin, called out :—

" Well ? Well ? "

Speaking quietly and with perfect control, Kathleen said :—

" To-morrow morning, Ralph, you will send that box back to Reggie de Tourneville, with all the bonds and papers. The money I have settled about. I think your father is right. I think it would be good for you to go away for a time, to Canada, perhaps."

" Canada ! "

" I have been thinking about it coming back in the cab. All these years that your father has—has been away, I have treated you too indulgently. I have perhaps been too indulgent myself. One's moral fibre slackens."

She gave a little sob, and the son threw his arms around her.

" Oh, mother, I will do anything you tell me."

She stroked his hair and whispered :—

" There, there, dear, let us forget all about it and start again. Now go. I want to speak to your father alone."

The boy embraced them both, then picked up his hat and stumbled from the room.

Raymond waited for his wife to speak, but she sat there looking down at her hands, upon her lap. At last he said :—

" Well, Kathleen, what have you to say to me ? "

" I'm very, very tired, Raymond."

He went up to her and kissed her lightly on the temple.

" Is that all, my dear ? "

" No ; can't you feel there's something more ? "

He gripped her shoulders firmly.

" Kathleen, is it possible—would you, after all—take me back ? "

She whispered almost inaudibly :—

" If you love me still."

The ex-convict laughed bitterly.

" We all have things to regret, Kathleen. Ralph and I, and even you, perhaps. The fiercest joy is to know that one has someone to suffer for, someone who can make one suffer. During the last few days I have experienced the appalling loneliness of the crowded streets. But if you put your ear to the ground you hear the eternal rumble of pity passing from heart to heart. Only to-day I heard a woman offering to make a sacrifice for another. Even in prison I found this. It is the only thing that makes life worth while."

" Oh, Raymond, I was terrified of you returning from prison. I thought you would look criminal and bitter, but somehow you look finer. Come, give me your strong arms. I am so weary."

He crushed her to him and murmured :—

" I will come for you to-morrow, dear."

For several minutes they clung to each other. Then he led her to the door and opened it. She peered out fearfully.

" The corridor is dark," she whispered.

He took her hand and whispered back :—

" Yes, it is dark, but there is a light at the end. And if we hold each other's hands tightly we will find a way."

"THE ECONOMY SHOP"

BY

ERNEST GOODWIN

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

IN its beginnings it was, frankly, an old clo' shop. Janet ran it.

She wasn't any too happy about it the first night when she stood in the shop, with the shutters up, and surveyed it, undoubted owner, with all its rummagy, untidy-bundly, ragbaggy character coming out stronger than ever in the dim light of its two out-of-date gas jets.

She remembered that a year ago, when it had become necessary to fend for herself, she had expressed decided views as to the sort of post she intended to accept.

"Chris," she said, pushing open the door that led to the sitting-room behind, "remember my saying that I must get into something where I could make my own hours, with no rigid supervision, and free scope for my own personality?"

"Did you?" chuckled Chris from his couch. "Well, haven't you got it?"

It came to Janet, in a sudden flash, that she had.

Of course, Janet wasn't the kind of girl you expect to meet running an old clothes shop. But the past twelve months had widened her views of life considerably. As she sat on the counter she ran over some of her experiences. For four months she had been difficult to please. Then it became certain that after his accident Chris, her brother, would be on his back for a couple of years at least. She began to grab at whatever was going.

She had had seven jobs in eight months. All alike had been distressing affairs. It didn't matter now, but she thanked Heaven for the gift of humour it had lent her.

There had been the working housekeeper business. When she took that on she had very soon recognized that one very little, wispy-haired, dirty-capped, untrained drab of fourteen was all that stood between her dignity and the cold hard fact that she was really a general servant. She tried hard to stand it, but there had been a valued young man lodger, a bit of a gay dog, who on the third day had tried on a bit of his gay-doggishness with Janet. . . .

As she stood outside the house with her box on the pavement, looking for a boy to send for a taxi, she wondered whether she had slapped the face of the valued young man lodger too hard. No, she decided. She had meant no more than a slap, and for the stairs being so close behind him she accepted no responsibility whatever. In the noise he made when he went down them backwards there was more of the startled lambkin than the really gay dog, and even

when he landed safely on the mat he had continued to bleat.

Then she had been a clerk in a laundry. She had started quite enthusiastically. "Purification," she whispered to herself, and tried to feel like a priestess. But, alas! there are more sorts of dirty work than one done at a laundry. Janet's job consisted largely in writing lies to people who complained of the things one always complains of about laundries. After a week of it Janet suggested to the proprietor, who wasn't such a bad specimen, that in future she should tell people the truth.

"What for?" he asked, reasonably astonished.

"Because they never believe the lies," explained Janet. "They'd think ever so much more of you if you just told them the truth."

But he only got indignant, called her a Bolshevik, and dismissed her.

THEN she was asked if she would like to drive a motor for a doctor. "I should love to," she said. It was true. She genuinely admired doctors, and had long wanted to get a chance to drive a car. She kept to herself the fact that she had never tried in her life. In the twenty-four hours' respite before starting her job she was busy making inquiries as to the theory of driving cars. She had the theory quite all right in no time. "One learns," she whispered to herself as she started off with the doctor behind.

He learnt more than she did, perhaps, but recognized this only vaguely at the time. But then he was vague about most things for forty-eight hours after her attempt to get round the first corner.

Well, those and several similar episodes were things of the past, and now she owned the old clothes shop.

She had passed it very often; she learnt from her landlady that the business was for sale, cheap, and on a sudden impulse she laid down fifty pounds and moved in.

Said she, "I can alter things here," and she did.

She held a sale, "Positively the only sale in the history of this business," and got rid of practically the whole of the ghastly, frowsty collection that gave the shop its peculiar odour. She actually got back in that busy week nearly the amount she had paid for the business.

She had the place cleaned, she had it painted, she had a name, "The Economy Shop," written elegantly along the name-board.

She was ingenious, she was strong, she was a worker, she had a business head, and she found scope for all those qualities. People from up the hill—ladies' maids, most of them—sold her old hats and dresses and blouses, and boots and coats. Janet bought shrewdly, tinkered things up most surprisingly, set them out in her window as daintily as if they had been flowers or confectionery, and within a month of starting she knew a living for Chris and herself was assured.

She launched out. She used to go off on early closing afternoons and attend sales. She was in no hurry. She began to find out where to go. She watched, she noted, she learnt. She began to buy. All sorts of interesting, unexpected things began to appear in the window of "The Economy Shop."

Janet was learning something more than merely buying and selling. She was opening her eyes to the fact that life was a splendid adventure, chancy, exhilarating. Every morning was a fresh plunge into the unknown. The old clothes shop was her cave, her fastness, from which every Thursday afternoon she prowled out and seized life by the throat and bade it stand and deliver. Sometimes it got away, but that was all part of the fun.

She had time now to note the passing world, and she began to recognize the existence of "Glasses."

He was tall, thin, with broad shoulders, a hat worn down nearly on his ears, a dreamy manner, and spectacles. He passed at irregular intervals on his way to and from the Tube station farther down the hill. Janet liked the look of him. "Glasses," the name she had for him, was meant amiably, not derisively. She wished he would come and buy something—or sell something—in "The Economy Shop." That hat of his looked awful. She bought several past their first flush of beauty and did them up carefully and put them in the window. One of these days, it was quite possible, he might come into the shop.

So he did, but it was evident that the purchase of a second-hand hat was quite the remotest thing from his mind when he made his casual entry.

She was looking out of the window one afternoon. She caught sight of "Glasses" coming up the hill on the other side, and just then two grubby youngsters, larking their way along with a dilapidated football, bundled each other into the road just outside the shop.

And then, round the corner, just as these things do happen, came a car. Janet had time to see that the thing was inevitable, she heard the screaming grind of studded wheels frantically braked, she saw the car swerve round towards the pavement, heard

people shouting, and a second later "Glasses" entered the shop.

He came in on his right shoulder with a boy tucked about him somehow, and he sprawled over and over in a most amusing fashion, and stopped at last with his feet on the counter and his head crumpled up against the sitting-room door.

It was incredible; he had been, she felt sure, forty paces away when the catastrophe loomed up, but somehow or other he had covered the intervening distance, had grabbed the doomed youngster from under the very bonnet of the car, and had hurtled across the pavement into the shop and safety.

The boy darted out of the shop. "Glasses" got up ungracefully, brushed his elbows and his knees, and murmured what appeared to be meant as an apology for his presence.

"Would you like a glass of water?" asked Janet. He was rubbing the back of his head.

"No, thank you," he replied, and started for the door.

"Well, would you like your glasses?" asked Janet, as she picked them up from the floor.

"Oh, thank you!" He blushed and accepted them gratefully.

"And your hat?" went on Janet, as he started off again.

"Oh, thank you!" he repeated as he put it on. He repeated the blush also. This time she let him go.

Janet knew something of football. Chris used to play stand-off half for the "Nondescripts." Janet was a staunch follower of her brother's club.

She realized that she had just witnessed a first-rate piece of "picking-up." "Glasses" must have crossed the road like a flash of lightning, those long legs of his must have glinted to noble purpose. She wished she had been cooler and had contrived to watch him as he snatched that miserable kid from his merited end. She felt a tinge of shame as she recalled her laugh at his flying entry. She knew that, all "legs and wings," as it had seemed at the moment, it had been a grand piece of work.

After that she kept an eye on the other side of the way, and when she saw him pass she gave him a little friendly smile, which, alas! she knew he never saw. He was just as lanky and solemn and slow and "Glasses" as ever.

But one afternoon she found him in the shop again.

"You buy clothes?" he asked her, looking at her gravely through the horn-rimmed glasses.

"Oh, yes."

"Men's clothes?"

"Yes."

"Then"—he produced a brown paper parcel—"would you care to buy these?"

Janet looked them over. The suit had been a decent one, but it was looking very sorry for itself at the moment. When she held up the coat it had a patient, pathetic droop about it. It seemed to appeal to her for kindness, and yet to shrink from sympathy. It reminded her of "Glasses" himself, and Janet responded.

"Two pounds, these," said she.

"Glasses" accepted with a promptness that told her he had decided beforehand to accept something less. She paid him the money.

"It's a beautiful day," she remarked cheerfully.

"I beg your pardon?" said "Glasses."

"I said, it's very enjoyable weather."

"Oh—yes—of course—horrid."

"I said beautiful," insisted Janet, firmly.

"Of course, very nice indeed," said "Glasses," and got out of the shop with much the same blush as before.

JANET took a lot of trouble with that suit. She saw it was well cut. It had the name of a Jermyn Street tailor stitched inside the inner breast-pocket. She brushed it and petrolled it and pressed it. She found a stand for it, and presently it stood in the window. It looked fine. She hoped "Glasses" would notice it.

Evidently he did. He came into the shop one morning. He looked thin and distinctly shabbier. He mentioned his errand very hesitatingly. He wanted to know if she could hire him out a suit of clothes. He had noticed one in the window which he thought might fit him. Janet chuckled. How long did he want it? Only for a day, for an afternoon, in fact. Then he could have it for five shillings. She got the suit out of the window, and he decided that it ought to fit, and took it away. Would she want a deposit? No, she told him; she knew him well by sight. Again he blushed and assured her he would take every care of the suit and bring it back that evening.

When he did so, she asked him demurely if it fitted. "Capitally," he told her. He had had clothes made for him by a first-class tailor no better cut.

"Really!" said Janet.

Several times after that he hired the suit. Secretly she wondered why "Glasses" wanted it at these erratic intervals. Then, at a big sale one Thursday afternoon, she found out. "Glasses" had come in that morning and hired the suit of clothes. She kept it out of the window now, in case anyone should try to buy it.

She went into Lemuel's, that aristocratic auctioneer's. "Glasses" was in the crowd, and when one of the lots came up he began to bid, evidently in conjunction with the man by his side, an "amateur," as Janet now called people of that sort. This was interesting. "Glasses," she guessed, bid on commission.

He didn't do it well. The lot, a picture, went up to two hundred pounds. "Guineas," said "Glasses." The man beside him said something hastily. "Forty," said another voice. "Fifty," said "Glasses"—and at that there was a scene, because the man with "Glasses" intervened loudly and rapidly, and told the auctioneer to "withdraw that bid," and said something rude to "Glasses," who remonstrated and apologized and seemed very unhappy. Janet was sorry for him—sorry for his blushes.

When, that evening, he brought the suit back—she noted sadly how very shabby was the one he was wearing—she wanted to ask him what that afternoon's affair had meant, but for all the appealing look about him he wasn't the sort of man after all to whom one could offer sympathy, and so she learnt nothing.

But she met him again a month later. Janet went in to Horlock's Auction Sale. She often picked up good things there. As she looked round she noted "Glasses."

Looking very shabby, he stood, catalogue in hand, and made little pencil notes now and then. Bidding was slow on one lot, and then Janet heard "Glasses" intervene—with a vengeance.

"Thirty-four shillings," said the auctioneer. "Thirty-four, six, thirty-six shillings, all done at—thirty-eight, thank you, sir, thirty-eight, two pounds. All done at two pounds?"

And then, most unmistakably, "Glasses" said, "Twenty pounds"; and without a moment's hesitation the auctioneer brought his hammer down and said, "Yours, sir," and the clerk said, "Name, please?"

There was a chuckle all round the room. There is always humour at an auction. People are prepared to laugh, and there is reasonable cause when a man bids up in one jump from forty shillings to twenty pounds. Janet felt the absurdity of it.

But there was trouble. "Glasses," red at the ears, was explaining things to the clerk. The clerk was snorting. He spoke to the auctioneer, who leant over and looked severe in the way auctioneers do. "Very well," he announced, "I shall put the lot up again, and any difference between the price you bid——"

"I didn't bid," said "Glasses."

"You did," said the auctioneer; "everyone heard you."

"I wasn't bidding—I was thinking aloud."

Everyone laughed.

He grabbed the youngster from under the very bonnet of the car, and hurtled across the pavement into the shop and safety.

"Well, think some more," said the auctioneer, and everyone laughed again, except "Glasses" and Janet.

A sudden impulse seized her as she watched him standing there, bearing wretchedly the glances of derision sent slyly at him as the lot was put up again—"Lot number seventy-eight, various."

He looked shabby, drooping, embarrassed. He took off his glasses and wiped them nervously—and as she caught sight of them she remembered the only other occasion on which she had seen his eyes without the spectacles, his shy, boyish eyes, blue and candid and honest-looking, and like a flash something stirred in her, a sense of championship. "Why," she reflected, with a sudden heat in her breast, "this is a brave man—I saw him do something fine and manly and dangerous, and do it cleverly," and with that she moved towards him.

"What is it?" she whispered. He peered at her, and recognizing her took his hat off. "I ought not to have spoken," he began; "it was my fault——"

"But the lot, what is it worth? You did bid, you know."

"Thirty—thank you, sir——" went on the auctioneer.

"I didn't mean to—but it's worth twenty pounds."

"Sure?"

"Sure, positive, double, treble——"

"Thirty-eight—all done at thirty-eight shillings?" said the auctioneer, lifting his hammer. "Come, sir," with a good-natured thrust at "Glasses" He turned away uncomfortably.

"Two pounds," said Janet.

A long man sitting on a chest of drawers at the other side of the room, reading a newspaper with every appearance of unconcern, remarked casually, "Fifty shillings."

JUST for a second Janet blenched. She could not help recalling her first auction sale. She had been "run-up" by the dealers mercilessly. She did not want, she could not bear the thought, that she should be trapped in that silly way again. Then she saw "Glasses'" eyes through his spectacles, and turned cheerfully into the fray again.

"Three pounds," she said.

"Ten," said the long man, still apparently engrossed in his paper.

"Four," said Janet.

"Ten," came from behind the newspaper.

"Five," said Janet.

"Ten."

"Six."

"Ten."

So it went on.

He wasn't a man—he was a mechanical beast. Janet hated him. As they neared twenty she whispered to "Glasses," "How far should I go?"

"I hardly dare advise you," he began.

She interrupted him impatiently. "But you must. I rely on you."

He drew a deep breath. "Go to seventy," he said, in a low tone.

"Twenty," said Janet to the auctioneer. The automaton behind the paper condescended to look at her thoughtfully. Then he remarked as he resumed his newspaper, "Twenty-five."

In a flash Janet had his measure. For all his assumption of coolness, he was near his limit. That jump to twenty-five, that cool glance of inspection, was all part of a piece of bluff. He was making a desperate effort to shake her off. She laughed to herself.

"Thirty," she said. Her opponent looked at her again. She saw his lips shape themselves to "forty," and instantly shaped hers for "fifty"—and at that he collapsed. At least, while that is too dramatic a word to describe his action, it indicates the course of events. He calmly resumed his reading as if he had never made a bid in his life, and never intended to.

"All done at thirty pounds?" said the auctioneer. "Come, sir, this exceedingly advantageous——"

"Blimey, what is it?" said a voice, and the room roared. No one seemed to know what the "advantageous" was. Down came the hammer.

"Yours, madam," and Janet moved over to the clerk.

"Name, please."

"Grex. How much do you want?"

"Ten per cent.—that'll be three pounds."

Janet had fifty shillings in her bag. "What have you got?" she inquired of "Glasses," standing at her elbow. He turned red. "Fourpence," he replied.

"Hold the lot," said Janet to the clerk. "I'll be back in five minutes."

She banked at a branch in Oxford Street. Within five minutes she had taxied there and back. She gave the clerk thirty pounds. "I want to take it with me," she explained. Of course, that wasn't regular, but, well, Janet was Janet, the lot was there all tied together—— Three minutes later Janet and "Glasses" and the lot were in the taxi on the way home. Then—

"Tell me something about these," said Janet. And "Glasses" told her. One by one he picked up and put down the heap of old iron things on the taxi floor. "Two watchman's lanterns—worthless—or say five

"I didn't bid," said "Glasses."
"You did," said the auctioneer; "everyone heard you."
"I wasn't bidding—I was thinking aloud."

shillings. Another, Georgian—a couple of guineas if you take your time over selling."

"These ?" asked Janet, picking up a pair of heavy pistols which smacked of Cromwell and his Ironsides.

"Birmingham fakes, worth nothing, except to a buyer who doesn't know. This, a blunderbuss, genuine Queen Anne lock, barrel faked. But this"—he held up a long thin sword—"this," he said, "is a genuine Jobson."

"A what ?" said Janet.

"A Jobson," he replied. "Oh, I forgot—you probably don't know what a Jobson is ?"

"I certainly don't." Then "Glasses" told her.

"Jobson is the name given among collectors to the unknown maker of weapons who flourished in the fifteenth century. No trace of him is found in any record; his real name, his birth, his history, are all matters of guesswork. All we know is that somewhere in Southern Europe, almost certainly in Italy, very probably in Venice, this man lived and worked. Very likely he was Italian, just possibly he was really an artist in another line, sculpture or painting. All that's certain is that there are in the world a number of mediæval rapiers of the fifteenth-century type, all from the same hand, and that hand possessed a matchless mastery that makes the weapons exceedingly valuable. Just for a joke he's always referred to as Jobson. This is a Jobson."

Janet looked at it.

"Are you sure ?"

"Positive. Look." He got out his handkerchief and, wetting it, rubbed away at the handle. Janet saw little exquisite figures cut in ivory start out of the grime. "Glasses" gloated as he rubbed. "Jobson—aha—Jobson," he murmured.

"It's awfully exciting," said the practical Janet. "What will it fetch ?"

"Not less than a hundred pounds—perhaps double."

"My word !" said Janet.

When they got to the shop "Glasses" helped her in with the things. He carried them through to the little sitting-room, and Janet asked him to have some tea. He and Chris talked, and after a time it came out, first, that he had been at Pembroke,

Chris's old college, fifteen years earlier than Chris, and then—Chris bounced off his couch without his crutch when he heard it—that he was Hurlthwaite, the full back—played for Cambridge in 19—.

Janet was as excited as Chris, but not for the same reason. She understood now what had puzzled her hitherto, the origin of that mighty swoop across the track of the motor, the miraculous "pick-up" from under the grinding wheels, and she was all ears as "Glasses" was led to explain himself.

When he left the university he had wanted to earn his own living—Janet remembered hearing of the friction between Hurlthwaite, the Manchester millionaire cotton spinner, and his eldest son—and he had found it hard. He was a man who knew things. Pictures, bead-work, fans, porcelains, weapons, watches, antiquities, and curios of all kinds, the various things rich men hunt for, all their details he carried in his head.

"That's why I don't get on," he said, apologetically.

"Why?" asked Janet, puzzled.

"Because I know too much. It's just a gift. Somehow I remember without an effort things other men have to work hard to seize. You'll think I'm boasting, but really, I assure you"—again with pair nervousness—"I'm not. But you see, since it's supposed to take a man all his life to learn about pictures, or rather just about one or two masters, I'm supposed to be a presumptuous fool when I claim to have all the knowledge that six men would be glad to share amongst them. And then, I'm nervous——"

"No, not really," said Janet, quizzically.

"Yes, I am," he assured her, solemnly. "To-day, for instance——"

"Ah, yes," she interrupted him, "to-day—how came you to bid?"

"I wasn't bidding. I can't bid. It's my temperament. I'm like a child at it. I know beforehand exactly what a thing's worth, but if I try to bid in public I either get a panic and leave off and let the thing go, or else the dealers run me up like the merest novice. If only," he went on, "someone would trust my knowledge, like you did, let me tell them exactly how far to go, and then bid resolutely——"

Janet nodded, and thought like lightning. "I'll talk to you about that," she said.

"Then, to-day, I saw at a glance what was in that lot, and when I saw the bidding was stopping at two pounds I thought to myself: 'How preposterous! If anyone knew, wouldn't he jump at the chance of getting them for twenty pounds!'"

"I see—and the words jumped out?"

"Yes, and I felt such a fool. I wonder if you have doubts about me now?"

"I haven't," said Janet, confidently. "You'll tell me how to sell them, won't you?"

"Rather!" said "Glasses."

IT was nearly a fortnight before Janet and "Glasses" stood in Christie's one afternoon waiting for the Jobson blade to come up. It hovered coyly about ten pounds for a minute or two; then, just as Janet was getting nervous, it appeared to make up its mind to behave itself, and in twenty leaps it went up to one hundred and fifty pounds. From there to one hundred and seventy it rather dallied, skipped lightly up to guineas, and then sank gracefully to rest.

Janet felt giddy. "I told you so," said "Glasses," smiling like a spectacled cherub.

"Please take me home," said Janet, who was surprised to feel herself decidedly shaky about the knees.

"GLASSES," Janet, and the baby have a town house, but they prefer to spend most of their time at their lovely place in Essex, where nowadays all the best people are trying to get country houses. The three of them have a high old time there. Just now and then "Glasses" comes up to town and has a look at special things that come into the market. He makes notes and gives them to Janet. She comes up and bids. The big dealers pull long faces when, just at the right moment, never too soon, never too late, Janet begins to nod her bids to the auctioneer. Sometimes they get away with the lot, but the trouble is that if you've overbid Janet you've probably paid too much.

There's a big, steel-lined room off Maddox Street where the big collectors of the world, the multi-millionaires, come by appointment. Janet sees them there. They tell her what sort of a collection they've made, and then Janet, after thinking things over, will get some treasure out of one of the safes and let them have it, as the crown and completion of their accumulated hoard. She tells them what they must pay for it, and they pay, and take it away, hugging it, in the cars which wait for them.

This story ought to wind up on a sentimental note regarding "The Economy Shop." But Janet wasn't in the least sentimental about that. Soon after she and "Glasses" married she gave notice in the ordinary business way, handed over the key, and left it, and that was all.

PORTRAITS IN PENCIL AND PEN

BY

Walter Tittle

IV.

ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS FROM LIFE, MADE AT SITTINGS SPECIALLY GIVEN TO THE ARTIST.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

IN June of 1923 Mr. William Archer obliged me by inditing a letter that ran somewhat like this :—

"My dear G. B. S.,—Mr. Walter Tittle is anxious to take your head off and include it in a series of portraits of the wise and virtuous which he is doing. I hereby certify that he has 'done' me, that the process was pleasant, and the result illuminating, inasmuch as it brought out my latent likeness to a Prussian general. Seriously——" and the letter ended with a generous tribute to the quality of my work, and the initials W. A. Together with a short missive of my own concoction, I sent it off in the hope that it would succeed in its mission of storming the closely-guarded citadel in Adelphi Terrace. Much had I heard of its impregnability.

The immediate result was precisely nothing. I read in the next few weeks of Mr. Shaw alternating at short intervals between town and country, and later of his departure for Ireland. Shortly after I left for a trip through France and Spain, and ceased to think more of the matter.

Some time after my return to London in the autumn I met at the Savage Club a man who, having seen some of my portraits of literary people, asked why I had never made a sketch of Mr. Shaw. I assured him that this was no oversight on my part, and that if he could achieve in Mr. Shaw a willingness equal to mine the portrait would not be long in abeyance. This he volunteered to essay, and shortly after descended upon the famous dramatist armed with several examples of my work.

The progress towards my goal was advanced considerably by this kindly effort, as it resulted in the actual setting aside of an hour when I was to appear to plead my cause in person.

Ascending the stairway at No. 10, Adelphi Terrace, two flights are achieved without the slightest difficulty. At the base of the third flight one is confronted by an astonishing barricade of wood and iron rods terminating in slender jointed spikes that radiate in all directions, presenting an absolutely unanswerable argument against climbing over, under, or around, and electric wires warn one that an alarm would be raised if the barrier were tampered with in any way whatsoever. I smiled as I contemplated this elaborate piece of assurance against intrusion, thoroughly impressed by the amount of fame that made it necessary. It is sometimes imperative to prevent the world from actually "beating a path" to one's door.

A painted hand pointed to a bell underneath which was lettered the dictum, "Ring." I obeyed, and soon a capable-looking maid appeared. Yes, Mr. Shaw was at home. I sent up the card of introduction

supplied by my obliging friend. After a short absence she reappeared. Her master was sorry that he was for the moment occupied with several people in a business matter. He would communicate with me on the following day.

The next afternoon was one of two that I had set aside to be at home in my studio in Chelsea. I had a considerable number of cards, as many kind friends wished to see the results of my recent efforts. Shortly after the function began, the studio being already comfortably filled with guests, my gorgeous beturbaned Indian butler, borrowed for the occasion, interrupted a conversation by plucking at my sleeve and repeating something that I could not understand. He motioned to a tall man with white hair and beard who was waiting to greet me, and my interrogation," Mr. Shaw?" was really necessary, as one expected element in his appearance was so utterly lacking. Where was the Mephistophelean facial expression that should accompany his keen and caustic wit? There was nothing in the least diabolical about this kindly, handsome, soft-voiced gentleman, whose first utterance was a sincere apology for not having been able to receive me the day before. " I came to-day to express my regret in person," he concluded.

I voiced my heartfelt gratitude for this great courtesy, remarking that it was indeed a pleasure to look upon him in the flesh and shake his hand, now that all the barriers had been hurdled, including the considerable one on his stair. He laughed : " It was not designed primarily to keep out visitors. Some time ago a burglar came, and departed with all our silver."

" Nevertheless, you must find it useful in other ways."

" Oh, yes," he admitted, " but I really intended to get in touch with you a considerable time past. Archer wrote to me about you, but I have been away from London so much, and then, too, I am apt to neglect such things." I couldn't find it in my heart to blame him !

SEVERAL of my guests knew Mr. Shaw and greeted him, and I presented some others. They immediately surrounded him like a lot of eager children gazing with delight and wonder at a benign and indulgent Father Christmas, and I am quite sure that Mr. Shaw was not the least pleased of the lot. Anyone who can talk as well as he surely must enjoy it. There came over his face an interesting transformation. It was still kindly and gentle to the last degree, but, as interrogations began to come from several directions, into his eyes came the flash of his wonderful wit. He was more the man that I had expected to see; he was at once obligingly Shavian.

A week later Mr. Shaw came again to my studio and sat to me for the drawing reproduced herewith. He entered the door with a swinging stride; he moves like a young athlete who loves the feel of his muscles in motion. His figure is athletic, very tall, straight and slender, and his snowy hair and beard seem, in a way, out of keeping with the general impression of youthful exuberance. His skin has the colour and texture of that of a rosy child, with a climax of red in the cheeks and nose, affording an almost startling contrast to his hirsute adornments. His keen, laughing eyes have the deep blue that usually belongs only to children, and his soft Irish voice retains a considerable leavening of the brogue. As he sat before me, talking delightfully the entire time, no more satisfactory realization of my dreams of the personality of this man, long a hero to me, was possible. " He is as good as his writings, and even more vivid," was my verdict to myself.

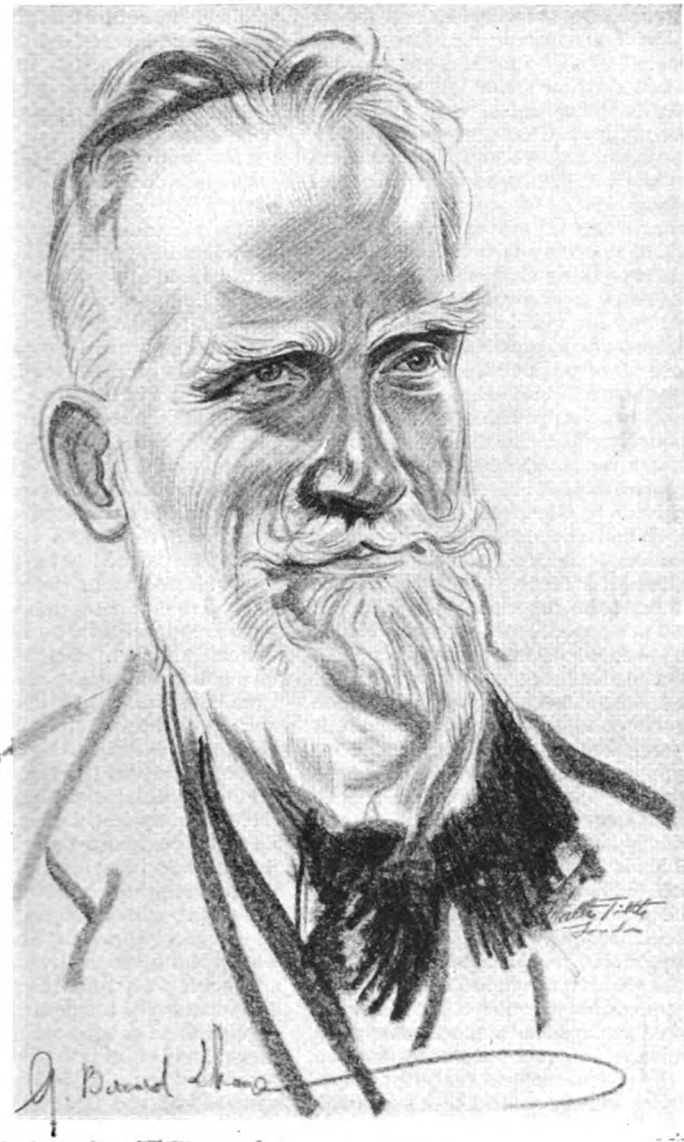
I told him of the surprise I had felt in our first meeting, at the absence of the diabolical element that I had expected in his expression.

" It's a curious thing how one can create a reputation that he must in some degree live up to, or *down* to, rather. The latter is easier. If one tries sincerely to write the plain truth, as he conceives it, about things in general, he is pretty sure to make enemies Recently I received a letter from a well-known writer taking issue with me on some point in my writings. He subscribed himself, ' Yours with admiration and detestation.' " My sitter laughed heartily here. " It would have been interesting if you could have made a portrait of me, not having seen me, or even a photograph, but only from the impression that came to you from my plays. I wonder what it would have been like? Neville Lytton painted me, years ago, as Velazquez's Innocent X. He got the exact costume, and adhered carefully to the same composition. My hair and beard were then the red that is usually described as auburn, and I had been frequently likened to the ' Red Pope.' The result was most entertaining."

" The portrait by Velazquez has almost more of the writer of your plays in its face than you have. The Mephistophelean quality is there, combined with a cruelty that your writings do not possess. It is quite a lot like my preconception of you."

" Look at the picture again," Mr. Shaw replied, " and I am sure you will discover a great deal of kindness and humour even there."

" I recently re-read your ' Cæsar and Cleopatra,' and I feel sure that you have



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

produced something of a self-portrait in the character of Cæsar."

"Do you think so? It is altogether possible. I never thought of it. Of course, whatever we do must be to a great degree a transcription of ourselves. I founded the Cæsar in that play upon Mommsen's account of him. Ferraro describes him as the pompous conqueror. There would be material for another play in this conception. By the way, do you remember the scene at the lighthouse where Cæsar loses heart, regrets that he came to Egypt at all, and predicts his own immediate downfall? Rufio sits by busily eating dates, realizing all the time that Cæsar's depression is due to hunger only, and offers to share his simple meal with him. Cæsar absent-mindedly accepts, and, as he eats, his courage comes back to him, and in a short time he is eager again for the conflict. Forbes-Robertson acted this part, and when the eating began I was quite alarmed. He grew red in the face, and purple; he coughed and could hardly say the lines at all. I thought he had been taken with a serious attack,

probably apoplexy. Finally he struggled through. Later I asked him what the trouble was. 'Well, you see, Shaw, we must not use dates in that scene again; they got stuck to my false teeth and kept constantly pulling them down!'" My delightful raconteur waved both arms vigorously above his head and laughed uproariously.

"The Terrys are notorious for their bad memories, and they have often found themselves in embarrassing situations because of this. Miss Terry had a very clever knack for filling in any lines of a play that escaped her with improvisations of her own. At a rehearsal of one of my plays her failing was much in evidence, and the daring and brilliancy of her improvising rose in proportion to her greater need. I was much amused, and later sought her out. As she saw me approach she was immediately on the defensive: 'Now, Mr. Shaw, don't scold me. When the opening night comes I shall have it all perfectly, I assure you.' 'But, my dear Miss Terry,' I said, 'to lecture you is farthest from my thoughts. Do you realize what you said? It was excellent: I like your version of this play better than my own. I'm thinking of changing it!' She relaxed into laughter at this and was greatly mollified, and on the opening night there was no difficulty at all."

MY sitter stretched his arms and legs to their extreme, and very considerable, length. "I say, you are a hard taskmaster. This is cruelty to animals! I am getting stiff. Haven't you nearly finished?" I passed the almost completed sketch to him. "Yes, yes, it is quite like, but you are making my nose too handsome. I am getting bulbous and rough in the face, the marks of approaching senility." I laughed. "Well, that's what it is, and one might as well recognize it. I can feel the difference caused by the passing years, even if it is not so very obvious. My mind is as good as ever, and I can still write with vigour, but I have not the endurance I once had. A sprinter is too old for his job after eighteen. A boxer at twenty-eight has seen his best days. He may really be a better boxer, but he cannot do it so long. In vocations like ours it is possible to work and improve over a much longer period, but there is a limit even to that. The time finally comes when endurance and then power begin to desert us."

"So to prove your contention as it applies to your own case," I replied, "you have recently written a play that requires five entire evenings just to perform *once*, with preface and addenda in proportion. If this is the result of your approaching senility, what sort of play will you write ten years hence?" The smile that greeted this remark was that of one who found no offence in the particular contradiction.

Later I had the pleasure of making two portraits in oils of Mr. Shaw. The sittings were a joy to me.

On one occasion he arrived at my studio with a copy of "Methuselah" under his arm. He took his place in the chair on my model-stand, settled himself comfortably, and opened the book.

"I hope it will not interfere with your work if I make a few notes. I am battling at present with a young actor who has a most exaggerated tendency toward overacting. He is the sort of chap who overdoes everything habitually. It seems to be a principle with him." The sentences came in fragments between his notations, and as he crossed and re-crossed his long legs they waved in the air with seemingly interminable length. "He shouts at the top of his voice in all his parts. If he took a dose of salts he would take four times as much as anyone else. He is a good musician, so I am marking his speeches in musical terms. He will understand this." He gave examples of the terms he was using, one being in German, from Strauss. "If I tried to affect him merely by exhorting him to go easy and not yell so loud it would have no effect. Young actors nowadays seem to think that, as they are paid for acting, every minute they are on the stage they must be acting busily. I try to beat into their heads the fact that they should be utterly idle most of the time. When they do act they should suggest enough to allow the minds of the audience to complete the idea, and not try to *do* the whole thing, eternally acting. Marionettes are back in popularity at present, and I am constantly misquoted in advertisements of them. They quote me as saying that these little mannikins act better than living people. What I really did say to the students of the Dramatic Arts Society was that they should look to the marionettes for a lesson against over-acting. In action they are full of expression and do their parts remarkably well, but when they are left lying idle they are *still* full of expression."

In response to a request to see his eyes Mr. Shaw removed his horn spectacles, donned for the occasion only, looking at me with the kindliest of smiles and without the least annoyance at the interruption, until I insisted that he resume his work.

"Do you have to interline the whole play?" I asked.

"Good Lord, no! Only one scene. I'd die if I had to do the whole thing." A few minutes later he stretched both arms high above his head, with the exclamation,

" Thank Heaven, that's finished ! " and began singing at the top of his voice " Yes, we have no bananas ! " finishing the chorus entirely. I told him of several learned discussions I had heard as to the probable meaning of this popular bit of nonsense, one of them being in the drawing-room of Mr. Edmund Gosse.

" It's really a nice tune, isn't it ? " he said, and hummed it over again. Followed, in response to questions, a discussion of American popular music. He thinks jazz very interesting, and quite possibly a source from which great music of the future may come. The freak instrumental effects that usually accompany the tunes he doesn't like. " Jazz is an evolution from ragtime, which in turn had its origin in syncopation, that can be found in the greatest of the masters."

" Do you remember this from Beethoven?" and he boomed out syncopated passages from several of the great composer's works, beating time vigorously with his hand. Brahms and others yielded additional examples.

As the portraits advanced my sitter evinced much interest in my method, and displayed a very profound knowledge of painting. Early in life, he told me, he had written a great deal of art criticism. In one of the pictures I tried to delineate the kindly Shaw of everyday life, the aspect least known to his public ; and in the other the Shavian sparkle that is apparent when he is talking in a more or less mischievous vein. Alluding to the latter, he remarked, "Ah, here you are painting my reputation ! " About the clothing he was quite particular, and described difficulties he had had with his tailors, with which I fully sympathized because of similar experience.

" The first fitting was usually most satisfactory, the cutter having done his work well ; but then began endless ripping of seams, snipping of bits of cloth off here and there, basting, pinning, and ripping it all out again and again, until after many visits my patience was exhausted and the suit a failure. Now I demand that they sew it up after the first visit, and I get good clothes. I asked my tailor how it happened that his clothing fitted him so well. ' I try on every suit that is made here, and keep the ones that fit me,' he replied. Many people prefer to have a lot of fuss made over them at their tailor's and their barber's. My wife insisted some time ago that, instead of having my hair washed by my barber, who had served me well at sixpence a time, I must go to an American expert, a woman, and pay half a guinea. Her treatment was supposed to make the hair grow, though the process was precisely the same as the one to which I was used, a plain wash with soap and water. The top of my head, where I need more hair, was not affected by it at all, but from the middle of my forehead grew a most luxurious moustache ! I had considerable trouble getting rid of it. See ? There is a trace of it left."

The space at my disposal will not permit the recounting of all the interesting and amusing utterances that it was my privilege to receive from this wonderful man. A few days before my departure for Paris, *en route* to America, he came to my studio in the evening, as he was rehearsing a play at the Court Theatre, near by. On this occasion he talked most delightfully about the writing of " Methuselah " and " St. Joan," giving an account of his research before writing the latter play, and his reasons for depicting Joan as he did. I was utterly absorbed in this discourse, and when he concluded I said that I would buy the book and read it at once. With a whimsical smile he said, " Why spend your good money? Tell your friends you had it all from Shaw. There's much more swank in that ! "

G. K. CHESTERTON.

ASCENDING the gradual hill from the station at Beaconsfield I came at the top to a fork in the road. To the right lay the new town, the twentieth-century development, reeking of fresh mortar and bearing the unmistakable stamp of the modern lumber mill. To the left under ancient trees wound a more alluring thoroughfare, its unhurried objective being the old town. This I gladly chose, casting my eye about as I proceeded for someone of whom to make inquiry.

Seated on a rustic bench beneath a large tree by the roadside I espied a picturesque figure. His hands were clasped before him on the top of a stout stick, and he seemed to be looking miles farther than any visible thing, so profound was his reverie. He wore a broad soft hat, from under which his long blond hair, shot with grey, ran riot over the collar of his Inverness cape. I hesitated before disturbing the thoughts that gripped this man, but perhaps he was waiting for me, as this was the hour agreed upon for our meeting, so I approached and called him by name : " Mr. Chesterton ? "

He started as violently as if an explosion had occurred in his immediate vicinity, and

rose suddenly to his great height. He came forward to greet me with a smile like that of a chubby boy of twelve. His voice was soft and boyish. On his face was at least two days' growth of blond beard. A red nose and the frequent plying of his kerchief proclaimed that he was a victim of the current epidemic of colds.

"I fear it is a bad time for you to make a portrait of me," he said. "I have been so miserable I have not even bothered to shave. Will my beard show in the sketch?"

As he talked he drew a design in the soil with his stick, looking up occasionally with his flashing small-boy smile.. I was greatly surprised at the altitude of the man and at his colouring. I expected to find him short, dark, and very fat. He is far from thin, but his huge frame carries the unusual weight quite easily. In harmony with his hair, his skin is blond and full of rosy colour.

Until recently, however, Mr. Chesterton was of really Falstaffian proportions. A serious illness has reduced his avoirdupois. I was given an interesting picture of him as he was by a couple of well-known magazine editors who were exchanging reminiscences one evening at the Savage Club. Said one of them; "In the old days he just filled a hansom cab. That's the most accurate measure of him that I can give. He really created quite a sensation when he walked along the Strand."

"Tradition has it that he once gave his seat in an omnibus to three women," his companion added. "He's a sylph now compared to what he was then."

Mr. Chesterton's house, "Overroads," is a quaint conglomeration of structures ranging along in an irregular line parallel with the road, from which it is divided by flower gardens. The interior is attractive, and has many little structural surprises in the unexpected shapes of rooms and varying levels of floors. The tiniest room of all is his study. In the "old days" referred to by my editorial friends I can imagine Mr. Chesterton nearly filling the place.

IT was not difficult to catch with my pencil the smile of this "laughing philosopher." The smile was nearly always there. He talked so constantly and so entertainingly that I thought him even more diverting than his writings. His laugh was most infectious, and I found my face constantly reflecting the happy expressions of the one I was striving to delineate. His great mane of long hair fell into interesting lines that I was eager to catch, and his odd pince-nez, with a straight bar across the top, insisted upon an oblique angle instead of paralleling the brows.

"I can never keep them straight," he said. "It has always been a great cross for my oculist to bear."

Mr. Chesterton spoke admiringly of Shaw, and laughed at the consternation he must feel that his products, so daring and revolutionary in their time, are so no more. "Man and Superman," "Getting Married," "The Philanderer," even "Mrs. Warren's Profession," are pale in the audacity of their subject-matter compared with what has been written since. The wit and brilliancy are there, but in other ways they are quite tame in contrast with the startling stuff that is constantly stealing their thunder. New movements in the art of the stage, as well as so-called "broader" standards of living, steal away the shock that they once afforded. Large groups in present-day society are openly living a more daring existence than the then thrilling plays of Shaw described.

There followed some amusing anecdotes of another colourful contemporary, Mr. George Moore. Mr. Chesterton has more admiration for Mr. Moore's skill as a writer than for what he has had to say. The affectation of his early "Confessions" is almost insupportable to normal, straightforward minds, and strikes a discordant note that has never quite disappeared from his work.

"In the time of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, when decadence was glorified and adored, Moore swanked as a moral desperado. He seemed always to be eagerly assuring the world at large that he was a terrible person, and fearing nothing so much as being thought respectable. If he were by any chance convicted of the latter offence, his house of cards would have been reduced upon him. Perhaps he would have been more implicitly believed if he had not protested so much. Over-anxiety in the making of a point is likely to engender doubt. One of our literary women summed up the situation very well when she said, 'A man who kisses and tells is beyond the pale, but I fear that Mr. Moore is even worse. I have suspicions that he didn't even kiss, but told.'

"In his younger days Moore had a penchant for attaching himself to prominent men and deluging them with his adoration. These friendships were usually of short duration, and almost invariably ended in quarrels. It is said that Whistler challenged him to a duel to free himself from this unpalatable hero-worship. Yeats had his turn next, and a long line of others succeeded until Moore had quarrelled with nearly every prominent figure in the artistic and literary life of the time. He undoubtedly cherished the qualities in his writings that are annoying to most of us. I was amused at a

G. K. CHESTERTON.

representation of him in a burlesque on the personalities of some of the present school of Irish writers given recently for the amusement of the members of a journalistic club. Moore was represented as pounding loudly at Yeats's door, and, as he heard the latter approaching, said: 'Don't come. I don't want to see you. I'm merely doing this to annoy the neighbours.'"

If this is really the attitude of this very clever writer, I, for one, could almost forgive him. But I have my doubts that all of the irritating things were written just to tease. Mr. Chesterton told one more incident illustrative of the impulsive fluctuations of this remarkable man.

"After his early ostentatious glorying in Paganism, he suddenly decided to turn to Christianity, so he rushed to find the parson in the village where he happened to be, told him of his intention, and insisted upon having prayers on the spot.

"I enjoyed my recent visit to America greatly," Mr. Chesterton continued. "Everywhere I was shown the most delightful hospitality, and the people were most kind and indulgent to my poor lectures. And they paid me well for them, too. The trip was exceedingly pleasant in every way, and the people charming."

"I am glad to hear you say that America was kind to you," I replied, "but you, too, were kind to America. Your new American book was most gratifying in its friendly tone. You went evidently prepared to find some pleasing things there, and found them. I have been pleased to note in the 'impressions' of recent British visitors a

different tendency to the time-honoured one of pointing out to the people of the United States all of their real, and many fancied, imperfections. Since the time when Dickens made such a thorough job of it, it was almost a rule for those who followed him to our shores to come as critics who believed that adverse criticism only was their function."

Mr. Chesterton laughed and said: "The era of British smugness and self-sufficiency covered a certain definite period, and ceased almost as promptly as it began. It had also a very definite reason. At the end of the Napoleonic wars England occupied a position similar to the one America enjoys to-day. She was the creditor nation. The countries of Europe were rendered almost prostrate by the wars, while England was the one nation that profited by them, being plunged into an era of commercial prosperity unparalleled in her history.

"It was a new and pleasing sensation to find herself suddenly so rich and influential. When the European countries planned some new project that required financing England had always to be consulted. She gradually and naturally came to think that this must be because of some particular virtue of her own, and, preening herself, said, 'What a clever and superior race we are!'

"So she took a patronizing attitude toward the world for a while. Anything that was not English was not quite right. But subsequent developments caused her to realize her error, and the conviction of superiority vanished.

"As for Dickens, I feel sure that his attitude toward America was due largely to peevishness over the pirating of his novels there. Mind you, I don't think that he consciously planned revenge with the grievance in mind, but it was undoubtedly a strong subconscious factor tending to exaggerate any dissatisfaction that came to him in his American sojourn."

The telephone rang and I was given a glimpse of G. K. Chesterton, the villager, in whole-hearted contact with the simple life of Beaconsfield. Wheeling ponderously in his chair, his soft boyish voice in marked contrast to his great size, he replied: "Hullo! Are you there? . . . No. . . . No, they have given you the wrong number. . . . Who? . . . Oh, yes, Mrs. H.—this is Mr. Chesterton. Yes, they are always ringing through to us when they want Slade and Willoughby's—yes—it was the same when we lived at Top Meadow"—and followed a pleasant little verbal visit the audible half of which revealed a thorough interest on the part of the famous writer in the social and civic activities of the little place.

When my work was completed he showed me some efforts of his own as a graphic artist. They were humorous illustrations in line for a book by his friend Hilaire Belloc, and were very amusing indeed. Mrs. Chesterton joined us upon the completion of our task, and gave her approval to my representation of her jovial husband.

We were summoned then to the dining-room, a large alcove which was evidently at one time a separate enclosure, with a slightly higher floor-level, and now part of the big, irregularly-shaped living room. Over the considerable repast which most English people make of "high tea" we talked mostly of art and artists. My host surprised me agreeably by his knowledge of the modern movements in painting and sculpture, a thing that I found to be quite rare in England, even among the followers of those arts.

Regretfully I tore myself away from this fascinating company, and ran most of the way to the railway station, as taxicabs do not haunt the street corners nor are trains frequent in Beaconsfield.

As a side-light on his systematic methods of work, I will return to a remark of my editor friend of the Savage Club.

"It is pleasant to work with Chesterton. His early experience in journalism was good training to make him responsible and dependable. He is never late with his contributions. When he is in London he often drops into the office, and if an extra column is needed he will sit down and write it on the spot. He works with great speed. It is delightful to find these qualities in a man of his position, when so many writers of little or no importance make such an affected display of so-called temperament, and madden one with useless delays."

ARNOLD BENNETT.

IN October of 1922, at the opening reception of an exhibition of my portraits at the Leicester Galleries, I first saw Arnold Bennett. For one whose profession involves a constant study of human physiognomy and character, it is rather disconcerting to find one's judgment utterly in error. Among the things on the walls were twelve lithographic portraits of writers that I had recently produced, and one of the proprietors of the galleries said, "There is Bennett. This is a good chance to add

him to your collection." But from my perfunctory glance I felt that I did not care to draw a likeness of him. I imagined I saw in his most unusual face a cocksureness and conceit that was not pleasing. This impression was a difficult one to reconcile with his excellent product that I greatly admired, and was the erroneous result of a single glance as he was leaving the place. I comfort myself with the thought that a better view of him would have resulted in a sounder estimate, rather than admit to myself the disquieting suspicion that I was merely stupid. In the meantime I heard many expressions of praise and affection from some of the most distinguished of his *confrères*, but more than a year passed before I knew how complete had been my mistake.

Mr. Bennett's splendid house in Cadogan Square is one of the rewards of effort that come all too rarely to artists of great excellence. One finds them dwelling usually in comparatively modest quarters, the mansions being reserved for those whose work has little or nothing to do with art. But justice is not always defeated, in that the work of some artists has a universal appeal. Mr. Bennett is among the fortunate ones.

Years ago, when I read "Buried Alive," I was impressed by the knowledge of the art of painting displayed by the delineator of Priam Farll. Here was a writer who could discuss pictures and painters knowing well what he was talking about. A glance around as an attendant took my coat and

ARNOLD BENNETT.

hat recalled this impression to me. Everywhere were interesting pictures, and their treatment betrayed a discriminating penchant, on the part of their collector, for what is usually described as modernism. Exceedingly well chosen were the examples, largely the work of the younger generation of French and British artists. It was not a dealer's collection. Few of the names represented would rate high in the Lombard Street of art. The pictures were evidently acquired by one who loved them and for that reason wished to possess them. My progress to the study on the second floor of the house was halting because of the numerous paintings. Once there I found some of the choicest examples of all, which their owner had chosen, apparently, to surround him in his working hours. I was promptly confronted by the man himself, and the impression that resulted from this meeting more than made amends for the erroneous one already recorded. He greeted me with an easy and unaffected cordiality that was most agreeable. There was a boyish lightness in his manner; somehow the encounter did not seem at all like a first meeting. I found him natural and modest to a degree greater than my original mistake of judgment in the opposite direction, and though I knew him to be busily occupied at the time with pressing and important work, he wore an air of care-free relaxation and placid leisure during the entire time that he had set aside for me.

AT his request I chose the light and pose, and studied my subject a bit before beginning my sketch. His head is unusual for its length, the feature contributing most to this elongation being the chin, which recedes gradually backward from the prominent mouth. His nose starts forward at a most unexpected angle, and is one of the most vigorous features of his vigorously modelled head. His eyes are of generous size and quite handsome; I recall Mr. Hugh Walpole remarking on the beauty of Mr. Bennett's eyes. There is a curious lack of synchronism in the ensemble of his features that gives a fresh surprise at each different attitude of his head; the whole affords problems that could not fail to interest any draughtsman. From his forehead a large curling lock of hair flares unexpectedly upwards, and the same rebellious spirit is noticeable in the unique curl of his moustache. His voice is rather small and high in pitch.

As I worked our conversation was mostly about art and artists. He told me of various pictures in his collection, of their creators, and how he came to acquire their work. Several of the artists were entirely unknown when they first attracted his attention, and their pictures were among the best of the lot.

"I started out to be an artist myself before I even thought of writing," he said, "but I knew enough to give it up and turn to an occupation better suited to me. I still dabble at it from time to time"—he indicated an aquarelle on the wall—"that's one of my things."

I went over to look at it and was sincerely astonished at its excellence. It was most bold in handling and excellent in colour. It reminded me of a lovely little Constable that I had seen recently. In answer to my praise he made light of it. I wanted to see other examples, but he had given them all away, he said.

Resting from our task, he showed me some of his choicest possessions.

"I'll wager you cannot tell me who painted this one," covering the signature with his hand. It was a slight water-colour. I immediately fell into the trap.

"I'm afraid to call it a Whistler," I said, "though it resembles certain things of his very much." He laughed and removed his hand, revealing the signature of Forain, the last artist who would have occurred to me as the possible author of the work.

"It is a very early one. I have had much pleasure in deceiving my visitors with it." Among other things that he showed me were fine examples of the work of Walter Sickert, and a very lovely still life by Roger Fry, much in the spirit of Cezanne.

Mr. Bennett talked most understandingly and with great enthusiasm about the works of the French Impressionists. As my sketch advanced he evinced much interest in it. The time allotted to me was rapidly being consumed, and I remarked that either my pencil must speed up a bit, or I would have to detain him from his work longer than the period to which I had agreed.

"I'm a hard man!" he laughed. "I just must work this afternoon."

"Inasmuch as I myself hate posing for a sketch as much as any of my sitters possibly can," I replied, "and find myself in constant wonderment that they will submit to it at all, I will hasten to release you."

The drawing was finished on time.

AN AWKWARD SITUATION

by

MARTIN SWAYNE

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

I AM a very sensitive man and I hate disturbing people or upsetting them. Owing to this, I became involved in a most foolish escapade. It began with an illness.

I was in bed extremely ill. Brittomar, the doctor, had a serious expression when he finished his examination one afternoon —the third day of my illness.

"You are very ill, Mr. Ballard. I insist on a nurse. The inflammation will not subside for another few days, and you will be left in a very weak condition. You are very weak now. I will send a nurse in at once."

"Is that really necessary?"

"Who else is to look after you? You can't expect your servants to go on nursing you. You really require two nurses. I'll send one in to-day. I'll telegraph. She'll be here in a couple of hours. Prepare yourself for a long illness. By the way——" he paused and looked at me meditatively.

"Well?"

"Have you any relations?"

"None."

"Nobody who could come and stay here for a time?"

"No."

He soon left me and I heard him start his car and drive away. I was living in the country within easy motoring distance of London, but in a part that was fairly lonely. My nearest neighbour was not in sight. My house stood back from the road, and behind it was a wood stretching up a hillside. I had two servants—a cook and a housemaid. A gardener came every other day. He lived over a mile away. At the side of the house I had had a garage built, and beyond it a long, low room that I used as a laboratory. For several years I had been carrying out some abstruse chemical investigations. It was disagreeable to me to have to realize that I was cut off from my work perhaps for weeks. I have a feverish restless activity which is only satisfied by extreme concentration upon my work. What was I to do with myself? I wondered how I should be able to endure a nurse. What would she be like? I rang the bell beside my bed.

"Florence," I said to the maid, "Dr. Brittomar says I shall be ill for some time. He is sending a nurse. Please have a bedroom prepared for her, and tell the cook she'll need dinner. She'll be here about six o'clock."

"Yes, sir. Is it very serious?"

"I don't know," I said, pettishly. "I feel very ill. I don't know what to do."

"You've been working too hard, sir. Night and day in the laboratory, and never out in the air."

"I can't sleep," I groaned. "I'm not allowed to smoke. I've got no appetite. I'm forbidden reading. What can I do?"

"Shall I draw the blinds?"

"No. The sky is something to watch. Oh, heavens, what shall I do?"

After she had gone I lay staring out of the window. Evening was beginning to soften the light upon the clouds.

Suddenly a strange idea came into my mind. It became obvious to me that I was going to die. It seemed astonishing to me that I had not known this before.

I lay without moving, with my eyes fixed upon the clouds that sailed slowly past the window. I was not exactly afraid, but thrilled in a painful way. I remembered Brittomar's face. He had known.

The evening slowly deepened. I must have lain for two hours without moving a muscle save that I closed my eyes. I heard the door open and shut again. I did not stir. Within me I had become contracted to a small point, almost without a thought

or a feeling. I began to wonder if I were not actually dead.

In this state I felt a kind of peace, or non-existence. I was free from all pain. I could not feel my body.

I heard the door open again and Brittomar's voice sounded.

" I've brought the nurse over from the station in my car."

I heard him come into the room and pause by the bed.

" Ballard ! "

I lay motionless.

I felt him pull aside the bedclothes. I knew he was looking closely over me. I felt his hand on my chest. He picked up my arm and let it fall. His finger lay for a long time on my pulse.

" Good gracious ! " he muttered. I heard him go out of the room. Then he came back with the nurse. I could hear her footsteps on the polished boards.

They both stood close beside me. I was aware of their very near presence. Brittomar laid his head against my chest. Then he removed it.

" He's dead," he whispered.

" When did it happen ? " she asked.

" The maid said she came in about an hour ago and that he was sleeping. He may have been dead then. I saw him about four. He was very ill, but I did not think he would die so soon."

So Brittomar *had* expected I would die. I had been right.

" He looks very delicate," said the nurse.

" I fancy he was never strong. But I did not expect the end so soon."

I felt a sheet drawn up over my face. I was dead. My thought had been confirmed —absolutely confirmed.

" The worst of it is that I don't know the address of any relations," said Brittomar. " He told me he had none. Perhaps the servants will know. He knows no one in the neighbourhood. He was never out of his laboratory save for an occasional visit to London. I scarcely knew him myself. You'd better stay here until the funeral."

I WAS dead. Within me was perfect silence and void. I heard Florence weeping outside the door. I heard Brittomar's voice. The door opened and the maids came in. They were both weeping. The sheet was turned back from my face.

" I can't believe it," sobbed Florence. " He can't be dead."

" He's dead," said the voice of Brittomar. " It was very sudden. He had no reserve strength."

" He always worked terribly hard," said the cook. " And ate next to nothing."

" He was always a kind gentleman," said Florence.

" It's a shame," said the cook. " And him so lonely."

At length they left me. I continued to be motionless. I was dead.

Time passed, but I was not sensible of its passage. I heard footsteps in the house. The nurse came in. She began to wash me. When she had finished she laid the sheet over me and left the room. I lay all night. I felt no cold. Next day they came to take my measurements for the coffin. They apparently had a coffin of suitable size, for they brought it that evening and laid me in it. " We'll screw it up in the morning," said a voice. I lay in the coffin in silence. I was dead.

The idea came to me that if I was dead I should not be able to hear voices. This idea was disturbing to me. It began to work in my mind. I could not stop it. Was I not dead ? I must find out. I opened my eyes. There were wrappings over my face. I moved my arm. " I am not dead," I said aloud from my coffin. " Because I can move and speak. I made a mistake."

With great difficulty I got out of the coffin and stood up. I felt weak, but no longer ill. I knew that my illness had gone. I was quite well, but very weak.

The nurse had lit two long candles and placed them beside the coffin. I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was midnight. The house was silent. The maids and the nurse had gone to bed.

I felt very cold. I searched for some clothes and began to dress.

My house was old and solidly built. The walls between the rooms were thick. I opened the door and listened. There was no sound to be heard. The nurse's room would be, I presumed, one at the end of the corridor. The maids slept on the floor above. I carefully descended the stairs In the kitchen I turned on the light—the house had electric light—and searched for some food. I found some cold ham and bread, and I made myself tea on the embers in the range, which were glowing.

I thought it best to close the shutters of the window.

The food refreshed me. I felt much stronger, but my hands were very shaky, so that I could scarcely hold my knife and fork.

It occurred to me that I was in a most awkward situation. I have already mentioned that I am a very sensitive man and hate disturbing people or upsetting them. My funeral was next morning.

" In that case," I reflected, in a mood of folly which I will regret for evermore, " it had better go forward. I will give everyone

I searched for some food and made myself tea.

a terrible shock if I appear now. It may drive the nurse mad. Let the funeral go ahead and I'll come back to life later."

I went back to my bedroom and filled the coffin with heavy books from the bedroom shelves. I arranged the wrappings carefully on the top of them. Then I went into the bathroom that opened off my bedroom. I shaved off my moustache and the three days' scrub on my skin, and carefully cleared away all traces of my action. I read and dozed until morning came. I went downstairs, and taking a heavy coat and an old hat—my clothes were somewhat shabby, not because I was poor, but because I neglected matters of that kind—left the house by a side door. I walked up to the wood behind the house and sat down on a fallen tree. I found some tobacco and a pipe in my pocket and began to smoke. I dozed at intervals. I was tired.

At last they came to fetch the coffin. I saw them carry it out and put it in the hearse. They had noticed nothing.

I turned up the deep collar of my overcoat and pulled my hat over my eyes. The air was fresh. The cemetery was about a mile away, through the wood and over the hill, but more than twice that distance by the road. I walked rapidly and reached the spot before the hearse arrived. I entered the cemetery and looked round. I could see no one. At length, in a distant corner, I saw a gravedigger. I went to him.

"Is this the grave for Mr. Ballard?"

"It's for a gentleman that died the day before yesterday at the White Lodge."

I nodded and walked away. I hid behind a tombstone. After a time I saw four men carrying the coffin up the path. Behind them came the parson, my two maids, and the nurse. Brittomar was not there I was certainly a hermit. I had no companionship with anyone in the neighbourhood. Still, Brittomar should have come.

I witnessed the ceremony from a distance. The parson's white robes fluttered in the fresh morning air. The coffin was lowered into the earth.

The two maids laid a wreath beside it. It was good of them. Then they walked away with the nurse. The parson followed them.

I went up to the grave, which was being filled in by the gravedigger.

"Have you been tipped?" I asked.

"No," he replied, staring at me.

"Then here is some money."

"Thank you, sir. Are you a relation?"

"No," I answered.

I walked up to the church and looked in at the vestry door. The parson was just coming out.

"Good morning," I said. "You have just buried Mr. Ballard?"

He nodded and gave me a serious look.

"Did you know him?"

"No," I answered. "But I have heard he was a curious man."

"He was a recluse, interested in scientific research. He died rather suddenly. I never met him. He did not attend church."

"An atheist, I suppose?"

"Not necessarily." He looked at me for a moment. Then he said "Good morning," and moved away quickly.

I followed him out of the churchyard. I began to stroll along the road. Why had the gravedigger and the parson looked at me so oddly?

When circumstance makes it impossible for a man to return to his old haunts, he is in a position to become different. I had about two pounds in my pocket. I could go to London and get some employment. I could become another person. . . . Yes, that was an interesting notion.

I TOOK the short cut over the hill and through the wood. At the edge of the wood I stopped and watched my house. The blinds were drawn. The station cab was standing before the door. The nurse was departing. Her box was carried out and put on the front seat. Then she came out and climbed into the cab. She leaned out of the window talking to Florence. Then the cab drove off and disappeared down the road.

Tears came to my eyes of a sudden. Why had I allowed my funeral to take place? How could I get back? It might be more difficult than I had supposed. The sight of that departing cab set up an emotion in me. I decided to go to the station, across the fields. I could speak to the nurse. It would be best to begin with her. The station was half a mile away. I walked as swiftly as I could manage and reached it shortly after the cab arrived. The nurse was walking on the platform. I took a ticket to London. When the train came in, I got into the same compartment as she did. She sat in one corner and I on the same side in the opposite corner. A farmer was in the carriage. The nurse had not yet looked at me.

The farmer got out at the next station. The nurse and I were alone together. I looked at her. She seemed a nice woman.

"Excuse me," I said, "but can you tell me if this is a fast train to London?"

She turned to reply, quite calmly.

"It only stops twice now."

"Thank you."

Her eyes were on me. I stared out of the window. After a time she looked away. Then she turned her head again. I was aware of this out of the corner of my eye. I suddenly looked full at her. I caught a strained expression on her face. She turned her head quickly and looked out of the window.

"I suppose you have been attending a case in the country," I observed. "You got in with me at Blistow. Has somebody been ill there?"

I could see she did not know whether to reply or not.

"Yes," she said at last.

"I know most of the people by name at Blistow." This was true, as I used to hear the gossip from my servants. "Who has been ill?"

"I attended a gentleman who died. A Mr. Ballard."

"Mr. Ballard of White Lodge?"

"Yes."

"I know that already," I said.

"Why do you say that?" she asked, quickly.

"Because I am Mr. Ballard."

She started, and her hands caught at the edge of the seat.

"Do not be alarmed," I continued. "I am in a most awkward position. I should like to have your advice. I was not dead. I suppose I was in a trance. I recovered at midnight last night. Because I was afraid of alarming you by suddenly appearing I thought it best that the funeral should go on, so I filled the coffin with books. They screwed it up this morning. I was in the churchyard when they buried me."

She did not relax her hold of the seat.

"What can I do?" I asked.

"Mr. Ballard is dead," she said, in a low voice.

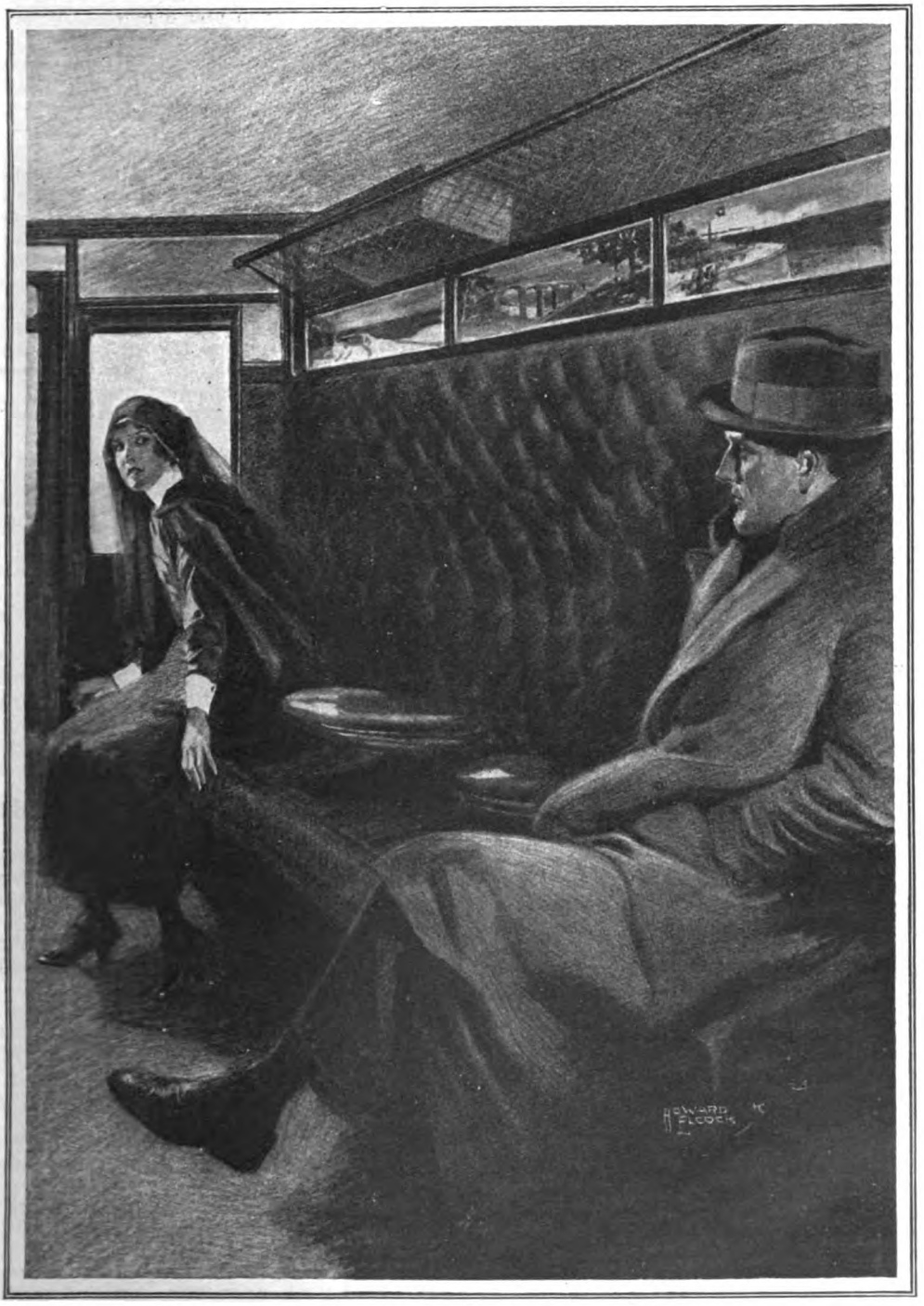
"You do not believe I am Mr. Ballard?"

"No."

"Do you remember that when you washed me you dropped the soap under the bed?"

"Oh," she cried, "I do not know what you are speaking of!" She turned towards me with an imploring look. "Please do not speak to me!"

I was obliged to obey her. She was violently upset. It was very awkward. When the train stopped again, she got out of the carriage without looking at me. I reflected that to return from the dead is a much more serious matter than I had supposed.



She turned towards me with an imploring look. "Please do not speak to me!"

" I am dead for her," I murmured. " It cannot be altered in her mind now. She has buried me."

I REACHED London and went to see my banker. I managed to obtain an interview with the manager of the branch I used.

He was writing at a table when I was shown in. He looked up. His eyes narrowed a little. He looked at me inquiringly. " Well, sir, what can I do for you ? "

" I am Mr. Ballard."

" Mr. Ballard of Blistow ? "

" Yes."

He seemed puzzled.

" I read a notice in to-day's paper that Mr. Ballard of Blistow had died and that any relatives of his were to communicate with Messrs. Hollingwood, solicitors, of Blistow. I am just writing to them to inform them that Mr. Ballard's account was with us, in case they did not know."

" It is a mistake," I said.

" A mistake ? "

" Obviously. You see me here before you."

He put his pen between his teeth and rattled it up and down.

" I don't understand," he said at last.

" It was a mistake. I wasn't dead. I was in a trance."

" But how do I know if you are Mr. Ballard ? " he exclaimed. " You may be impersonating him. I have no proof."

" Let me write my signature."

He pushed a piece of paper towards me. I wrote upon it. For some reason I could not form the letters properly. I crossed out my first attempt and tried again. My hand was very shaky. I gave him the result. He went out of the office and returned with a signature-book. He studied it for a time, and then shook his head.

" This won't do," he said. He leaned back in his chair and looked at me thoughtfully.

" My hand is shaky," I said. " I was very ill. In any case, you know my face."

He shook his head.

" I don't recollect you. You are not the Ballard that I knew."

" I have shaved off my moustache."

" Why ? "

It was really very awkward. I tried to explain. I could not get going, and came to a stop. I was so awfully tired. A considerable silence followed. His look became stern. At length I got up.

" It doesn't matter," I said. " I have enough money for the time. No doubt my handwriting will become normal in a day or two, and you will see the report of my death contradicted. Good morning."

I walked out of the bank. It was afternoon, so I went in search of something to eat. I felt very hungry and weak. As I walked through the streets I became giddy. I fell to the ground and became unconscious. When I regained my senses I found myself in an ambulance. I was taken to a hospital and put to bed.

They asked my name. I said my name was Henry Ballard, and my address was White Lodge, Blistow. A young doctor examined me. He asked me how it was that I was in so emaciated a state. I said I did not know I was in an emaciated state. He said I was seriously ill, because my pulse was very feeble, my heart dilated, and my general condition one of great exhaustion. I asked if I could not travel back to Blistow that evening, but permission was refused.

" We have communicated with Blistow," he said.

" In that case I must tell you something," I replied. " I am thought to be dead at Blistow."

" How is that ? "

" My funeral was this morning. The doctor made a mistake. I was not dead, but in a trance. I woke out of it last night."

A peculiar expression came into the young doctor's face.

" Then why did your funeral take place to-day ? "

" It was an act of freakish folly on my part. I put books in the coffin to weight it, and slipped out of the house unobserved. I did it in order not to give anyone a shock ! "

" Well," he said, " you had a lucky escape ! You must try and sleep now."

It was clear that he did not believe me. I slept deeply that night and woke feeling refreshed. A policeman came to see me after breakfast.

" Did you call upon the manager of the Regal Street Branch of the Chelsea and Mercantile Bank yesterday ? "

I nodded.

" Did you state you were Henry Ballard of White Lodge, Blistow ? "

" Yes."

" You also informed the hospital authorities here that you were the man ? "

" Certainly."

" What is your object in making these statements ? "

" I am Henry Ballard."

The policeman consulted his notebook.

" Henry Ballard of White Lodge, Blistow, died four days ago in bed from heart failure and was buried in Blistow Parish Church yesterday early in the morning by the Reverend Theophilus Ward."

I shook my head.

" Look at my clothes," I said. " Look

at the name on my shirt or collar or handkerchief."

He took my clothes out of the locker and examined them.

"How did these garments come into your possession?"

"They're mine. I suppose the right answer to your question is that I bought them."

He returned the clothes to the locker and sat down again. He made an entry in his pocket-book.

"It's lucky for you that you didn't try and get money from the Chelsea and Mercantile Bank."

"I wanted money, but didn't get as far as asking for it."

"Oh, you did, did you? If you had tried you'd be under arrest now. As it is, you're to be watched. If you take my advice, you'll chuck it."

"Chuck what?"

"Pretending you're Henry Ballard."

He got to his feet, put his thumbs under his belt and hitched it round a little, picked up his helmet, and tiptoed out of the ward. The other inmates of the ward stared at me. A nurse came up, smiled sweetly as if nothing had happened, and arranged my bed.

"How long shall I be kept here?" I asked.

"Till you're better," she said, brightly.

"Can I send a telegram?

"I'll ask the Sister. Here she is. Sister, Number Eight wants to send a telegram."

"Can he pay for it?"

"Yes," I said. "There's some money in my trouser pocket."

The Sister shook her head.

"There was no money on you when you were picked up by the ambulance," she said. "A starving man like you could scarcely be expected to have money on him."

She moved down the ward.

"It must have been stolen," I said to the nurse. "I really am in a difficult situation. Do you really believe I am a starving beggar?"

"You don't look exactly prosperous, Number Eight," she said, smiling pleasantly. "But we'll soon make you look better. You're on a special diet."

"I am a scientist," I said. "At my home in Blistow I carry out research work in chemistry."

"Hush!" she said. "You are not supposed to talk. Sleep as much as you can."

THE young doctor visited me again. He was uncommunicative, and looked at me steadily. In the afternoon the policeman reappeared.

"You're under arrest this time," he announced.

"Why?"

"For breaking into Henry Ballard's house at Blistow in the early hours of yesterday morning and stealing some of his clothes and helping yourself to food in the larder." He looked at his notebook. "And you're suspected of taking a lot of books. What did you want with books?"

"I put them in the coffin."

"What coffin?"

"The coffin that I was lying in when I woke from my trance."

He regarded me with disfavour.

"You can tell that story to the magistrate. Your case will come on at the Blistow County Court. What did you want with books?"

"I've told you."

"Can't see the sense of stealing books," he muttered. He sighed and settled himself in the chair beside me. After a time I asked him if he was going. He replied that as I was under arrest it was necessary for a police officer to sit beside me until I could be moved to prison. A visiting physician appeared in the late afternoon, accompanied by a crowd of students and the young doctor. He paused near my bed and had a low conversation with the Sister. He gave me a hurried glance and passed on.

"If you please," I called out, "I should like to speak to you about my case."

The policeman rose and went to the physician. I heard him ask when I could be moved. The physician approached my bed and felt my pulse. He gave me the ghost of a smile and looked away.

"Can you communicate with Dr. Brittomar of Blistow?" I said. "He will identify me as Henry Ballard. I am accused of breaking into my own house."

The young doctor murmured something. The physician nodded.

"Brittomar made a mistake," I said. "He pronounced me dead. I was in a trance. I recovered, and, not knowing how to act, I——"

"Yes, yes," said the physician. "You need rest." He turned to the young doctor. "I think he'll be able to be moved tomorrow."

A policeman sat beside me all that night. I kept waking and seeing him, motionless in his chair. It was disagreeable.

I was moved that evening and taken in a cab at the expense of the Government to prison. Next day I was taken by train to Blistow and charged at the county court with breaking into the house of Henry Ballard, deceased, of White Lodge. I knew none of the members of the bench of magistrates. But, then, I knew nobody in Blistow. Asked what I had to say, I announced that I was Henry Ballard.

It was pointed out to me that my statement was too ridiculous to listen to. I persisted, and said that if Dr. Brittomar, or either of my servants, or my gardener, James Watt, of Little Pendron, were called, they would corroborate my statement. Asked how I could explain the fact that Henry Ballard was buried at the parish church, I gave them a history of my trance, my awakening, and the foolish escapade that followed. It was received with incredulity.

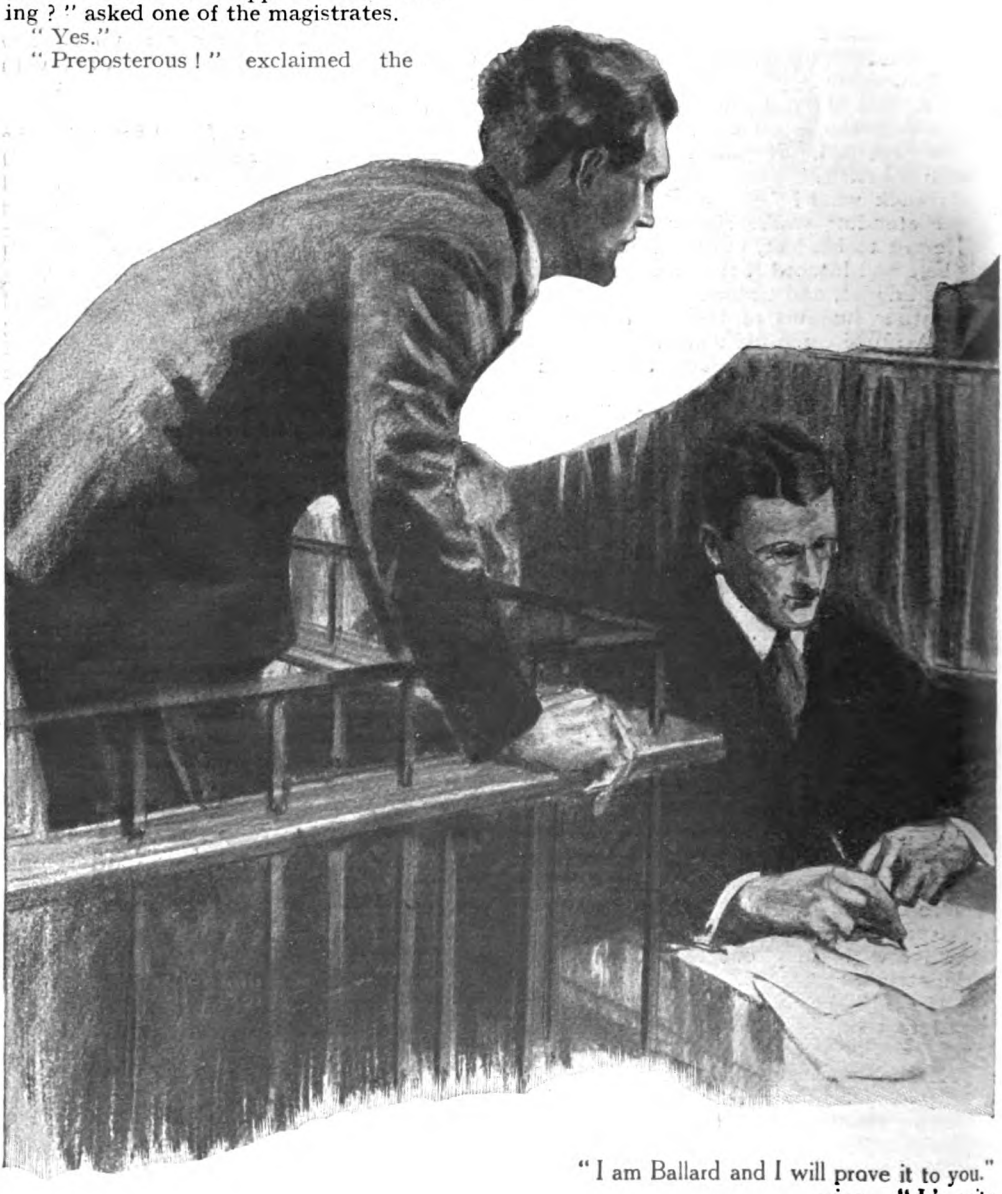
"You state that you filled the coffin with the books that are supposed to be missing?" asked one of the magistrates.

"Yes."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed the magistrate. "Nobody can believe such a story. It is unfortunate that the late Mr. Ballard was so retiring in his habits that none of us knew him even by sight. I suppose we'd better ask Dr. Brittomar to come here."

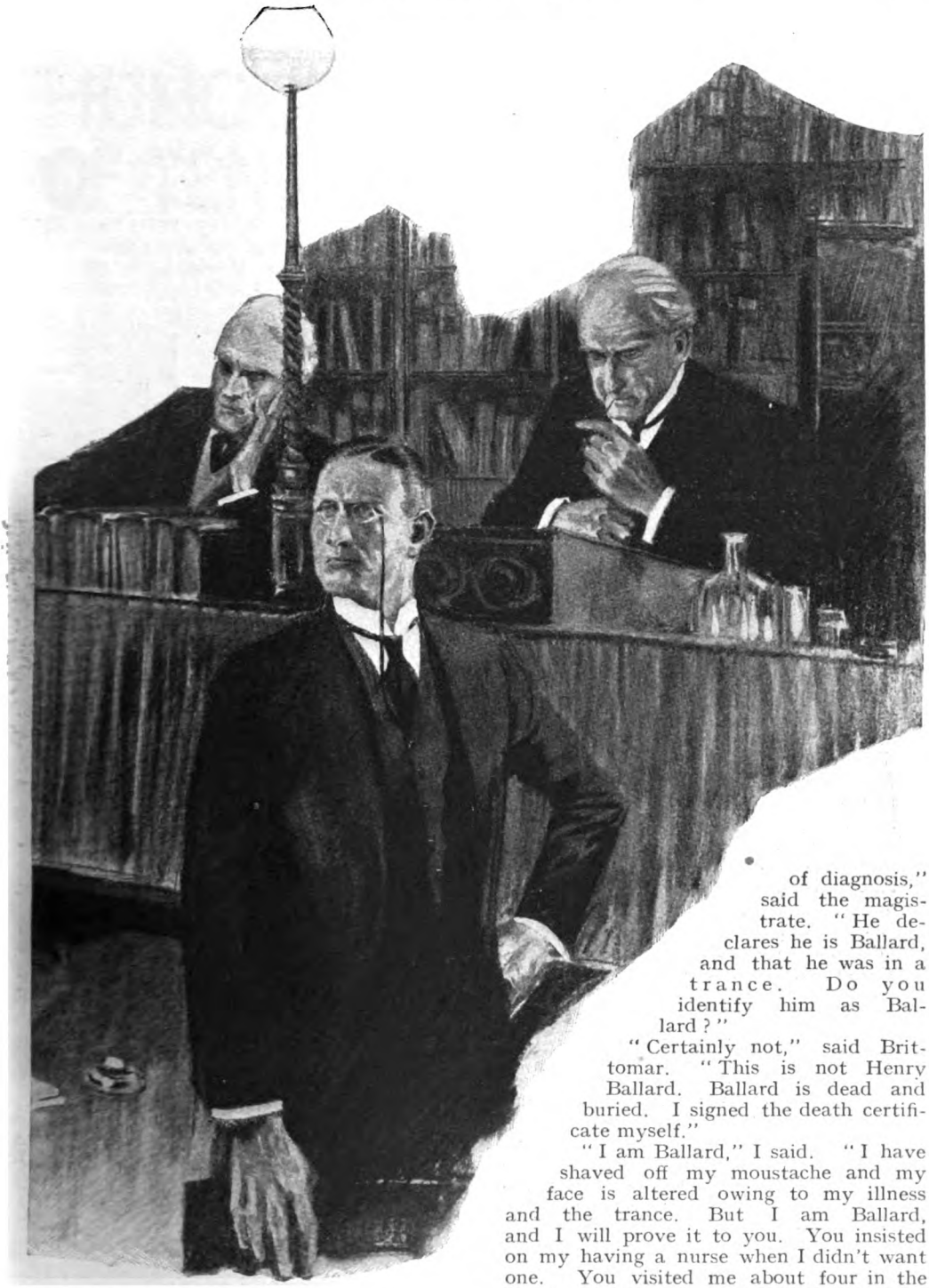
Brittomar was sent for. He arrived in a short time. One of the magistrates, apologizing for taking up his time, related why he had been sent for. Brittomar stared at me.

"He maintains that you made an error



"I am Ballard and I will prove it to you."

mine. "It's quite



Brittomar's eyes were fixed unswervingly on impossible," he said.

of diagnosis," said the magistrate. "He declares he is Ballard, and that he was in a trance. Do you identify him as Ballard?"

"Certainly not," said Brittomar. "This is not Henry Ballard. Ballard is dead and buried. I signed the death certificate myself."

"I am Ballard," I said. "I have shaved off my moustache and my face is altered owing to my illness and the trance. But I am Ballard, and I will prove it to you. You insisted on my having a nurse when I didn't want one. You visited me about four in the afternoon and returned with the nurse about six. I had then fallen into a trance which you mistook for death."

Brittomar's eyes were fixed unswervingly on mine. He shook his head.

"It's quite impossible."

A LONG, awkward silence fell in the court. I became weak, and sat down on a chair. Brittomar continued to stare at me. His eyes were stony. One of the magistrates coughed and said something in a low voice. Florence and my cook, Maud, were brought into court. They stared at me. I tried to smile. They refused to recognize me. I say that they refused because it seemed to me that this is how it was. But I think the explanation was more that I was dead and buried for them, as I was for the nurse, and nothing would alter their opinion that this was so, save at the expense of their reason. I got on to my feet.

"It is very awkward," I said. "But I can prove that I am Ballard. Florence, I gave you ten pounds at Christmas for your aged mother who lives at Sandown. Do you remember?"

"It's not true," she said, in a faltering voice.

"It is true," I said. She became very pale.

"Try and understand why I did all this," I continued, turning to the magistrates. "I woke out of my trance, or state of suspended animation, or whatever it was, at midnight. I was lying in my coffin. I had been thought to be dead for over twenty-four hours. What could I do?" I looked at Florence and raised my arm. "If I had walked into your room, you might have gone mad with terror. I couldn't ring the bell. Imagine the bell ringing from a room in which only a dead person is lying! I tell you, it was a most awkward situation. I dislike alarming people or upsetting them. You all expected a funeral. I thought the best thing I could do was to let the funeral go forward. I thought—and most foolish it was of me, as I now realize—that I could break the news of my existence later on in some way that wouldn't terrify anyone. That's why I put books in the coffin and slipped out of the house. I was amused by the situation at first. It was amusing to see my own funeral. I saw you and Maud put a wreath on my grave. It was good of you. But I soon began to realize how serious it was. I bitterly repented that I had not proclaimed my return to life before the funeral. But it was too late. Do you understand, Florence?"

She only stared at me. I thought I saw a flash of hate in her eyes.

I addressed my cook.

"Maud, when I gave Florence ten pounds for her mother, I gave you money to buy a sewing machine at the same time, in order to equalize things."

She became quite white, but said nothing. They both stared at me.

I addressed Brittomar again.

"You attended me two years ago for bronchitis, and advised me afterwards to go to Brighton for a fortnight. I refused because I was in the middle of important research work."

He compressed his lips and said nothing. It was really a most awkward situation. I was not wanted. My return to life was not desired by any of them. Brittomar's case was obvious to me. He did not want to have to face the charge of an error in diagnosis. My maids could not liberate their minds from the conviction that I was dead. They were not only defending their reason, but their right to my death.

The magistrates regarded me with strange expressions.

"To clinch matters, gentlemen," I said, "will you have the grave dug up and the coffin opened? It is the best way to end this disagreeable situation."

"I protest," said Brittomar.

The magistrates consulted. A message was sent to the parson. It was necessary to obtain permission from a higher quarter, and this meant delay. Brittomar energetically continued to protest.

I was taken to the local prison and kept in custody, pending developments. Next day, the proper authority having been obtained, the grave was opened. A large crowd was present. The coffin was dragged out and opened. In it were found a few dozen books.

I experienced the most awkward moment of my life. Everyone stared at me with disgust and hatred. My maids avoided my look. Brittomar left without giving me a glance. The parson refused to speak to me. I was discharged by the magistrates in the most chilling way that can be imagined. I returned to my house. My maids insisted on leaving at once, and I was left alone. I moved out of the neighbourhood next week and went to live on the South Coast. The house was put up for sale.

The strange thing is that I did it all for the best. Being what I am, foolishly sensitive to causing trouble, what else could I have done?

THE HUMOURS OF TENNIS

Illustrations by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

TO enable the uninitiated to appreciate the lighter side of lawn tennis, it may be as well to explain that there are really three styles of play, which we will call "pat ball," "strike ball," and "place ball."

THE RULING PASSION.

THE INTRUDER.

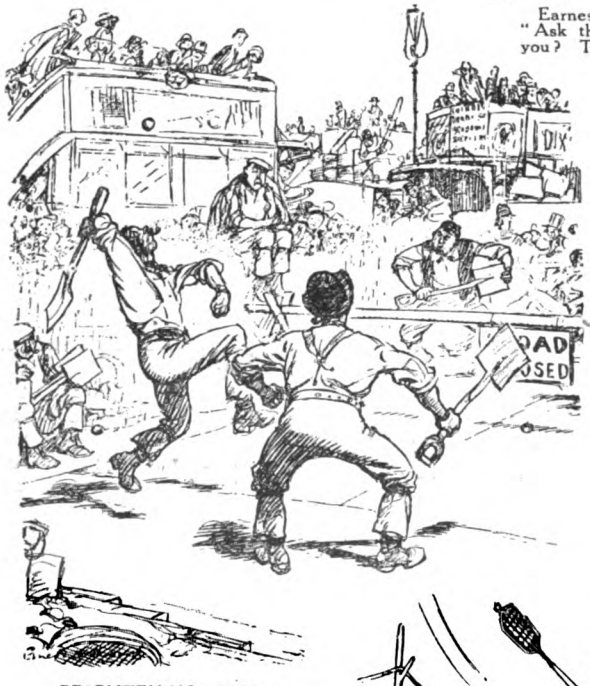
The first is played by beginners and those who are hampered by corpulence or hysteria; the second is the average game of the person who likes to mingle exercise with social enjoyment; and the last is lawn tennis proper, as played with vigorous enthusiasm and inexorable seriousness by the monopolists of the best courts.

Separately the votaries of these various styles are not particularly amusing, but when they are allowed to mingle the results are often quite humorous. Mr. F. R. Burrow, the popular referee, writing in his reminiscences of the early days of mixed doubles —or "scratch mixed," as they were called—when brilliant lady players were rare, relates how one couple met with considerable success because they had a distinct understanding that the lady had nothing to do but to get out of the way as quickly as possible. She would serve or receive the ball and then step right out of

the court—and it is recorded that she would sometimes go so far as to settle herself in a comfortable chair whilst her partner tackled the opposing pair single-handed! To-day, however, the position is often reversed, a fact which is reflected in Mr. G. L. Stampa's drawing in these pages.

Despite the masculine tendencies of the modern sports girl, however, the eternal feminine continues to reveal itself on the courts. There is a story told of two young men who were watching a dainty and graceful girl leaping high into the air as she made her strokes.

Earnest Tennis-Player (to daughter of the house): "Ask them to put something on their heads, will you? The dazzle puts me off my game."



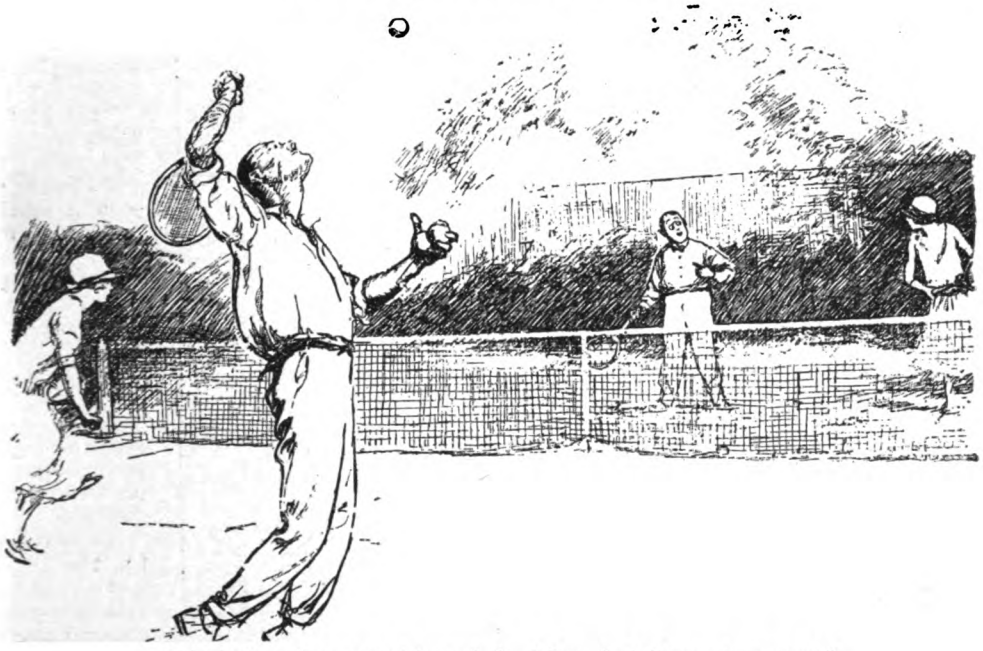
BRIGHTENING THE LUNCHEON HOUR.
A little hard-court practice under L.C.C. rules.

"I can't understand her at all," said one. "Yesterday when she played with me she was as stiff as a poker."

"Yesterday," replied the other, "she was not wearing her silk stockings."

Again, there are fashions in tennis as in every other game played by the fair sex. The introduction by Mlle. Lenglen of the scarf or bandeau tied round the head, ostensibly to keep the hair in order, was immediately

Residence at Wimbledon is having a marked effect on our charlady's style.



Bright Beginner (as opponent is serving): "Does the ball come to me now?"

copied by almost every girl player in the land. Apropos, a story is told of two elderly charladies who encountered a young woman thus adorned.

"This 'ere tennis is gettin' a dangerous game," said one. "That's the third girl I've seen to-day with 'er 'ead all bandaged up."

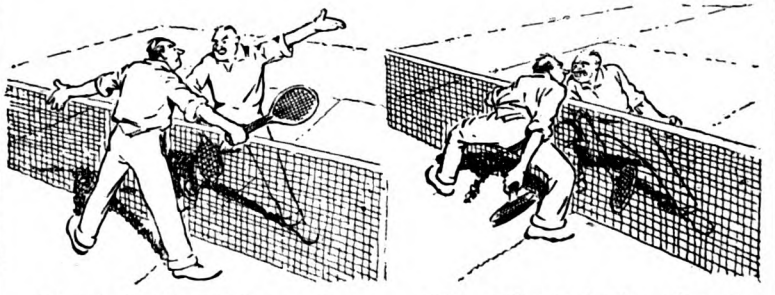
The ignorance of the non-player is the basis for another anecdote, which refers to a

As she fondly hoped she appeared when executing her famous volley.

As the camera (which, presumably, cannot lie) told her she appeared.

"That was a double fault I served, wasn't it? Love-fifteen."
"No. Your second one was in all right, I think. Fifteen-love."

"But I'm almost sure it was not. Love-fifteen."
"No, really, I'm practically certain it was in. Fifteen-love."



"It looked miles out to me. Love-fifteen."
"Well, you were wrong, that's all. Fifteen-love."

"But, my dear good fellow, I know I'm right. Love-fifteen."
"My very good idiot, you aren't. Fifteen-love."

"You pig-headed beast, I am. Love-fifteen."
"You're a liar! You're not. Fifteen-love."

"Well, call it a let."

lady of the new-rich class who was watching a tournament in progress at a private party. Suddenly she proclaimed to her partner in a very loud voice: "Quite nice, my dear—but my sister has just moved into a new house, and she's got a *much* bigger court than this."

The tennis tournaments held in various parts of the country provide several amusing examples of real-life humour, as Mr. Burrow reveals in his reminiscences. On one occasion a feline female was approached with the request that she should umpire a ladies' singles.

"Oh, I can't, really," she protested.

"Please do—as a special favour," implored her friend.

"Who are the players?"

"Miss X. against Miss Z."

"Oh, yes, rather! I'd love to umpire for them—*they both hate me!*"

A first cousin to the evergreen "caddie" joke beloved of golfers came to light during a tournament at Sunderland. One of the ball boys had been watching a very indifferent player for some time in silence. Suddenly he blurted out: "Mon, ye're fair wonderful. Ye hit the net *every time!*"

Perhaps the best true story of the championship matches, however, is that of the player at Wimbledon whose opponent brought off a remarkable series of "fluke" shots. Time after time the ball struck the wood of the latter's racket and dropped just over the net, until the other man became exasperated, threw down his racket, took out his handkerchief, and commenced to wipe his eye.

"What's the matter?" inquired his opponent. "Got some dust in your eye?"

"No," replied the other, tersely. "Splinters."

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

707.—A PROHIBITION POSER.

I HAVE been reminded that when giving No. 654—A New Measuring Puzzle, I dealt with the simplest possible conditions for these liquid puzzles, and seemed to suggest that I would carry the investigation farther. Let us therefore take another step and look at those cases where we are still allowed any amount of waste, though the liquid is now limited to a stated quantity.

The American Prohibition authorities discovered a full barrel of beer, and were about to destroy the liquor by letting it run down a drain when the owner pointed to two vessels standing by and begged to be allowed to retain in them a small quantity for the immediate consumption of his household. One vessel was a 7-quart and the other a 5-quart measure. The officer was a wag, and, believing it to be impossible, said that if the man could measure an exact quart into each vessel he might do so. How was it to be done in the fewest possible transactions without any marking or other tricks? Perhaps I should state that an American barrel of beer contains exactly 120 quarts.

708.—VERBAL ARITHMETIC.

ADDITION is an imposition.

```
  SEND
  MORE
 -----
 MONEY
 -----
```

SUBTRACTION is as bad;

```
  EIGHT
   FIVE
 -------
   FOUR
 -------
```

MULTIPLICATION is vexation,

```
   TWO
   TWO
 -----
 THREE
 -----
```

DIVISION drives me mad.

```
TWO)SEVEN(TWO
      BOB
     -----
       JOE
       OVV
     -----
       VESN
       VESN
     -----
```

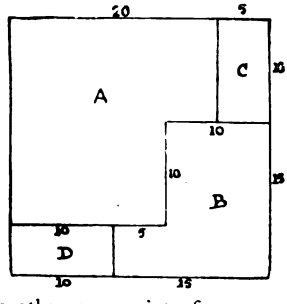
In each puzzle every letter represents a different digit, but a letter does not necessarily stand for the same digit in the case of every puzzle.

709.—SCORING AT BILLIARDS.

HERE is a little question that some people will trip over in giving too hasty an answer. What is the highest score that can be made in two consecutive shots at billiards?

710.—THE SQUARES OF VENEER.

A MAN has two square pieces of valuable veneer, each measuring 25 inches by 25 inches. One piece he cut, in the manner shown in our illustration, in four parts that will form two squares, one 20in. by 20in. and the other 15in. by 15in. Simply join C to A and D to B. How is he to cut the other square into five pieces that will form again two other squares with sides in exact inches, but not 20 and 15 as before?



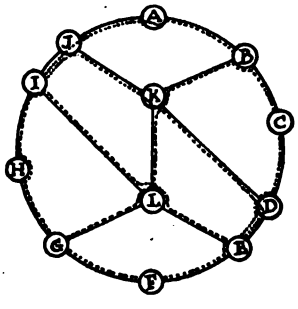
711.—A CHARADE.

A CORRESPONDENT sends me the following. It is interesting as being on the same lines as a familiar old one that I have given in these pages.

S, in my *first*, makes very nearly half of me,
And *next* you'll find the letter C appear.
Ere my *remainder* gives you up the key,
I think you'll own I'm perfectly sincere.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

703.—THE SURVEYOR'S PROBLEM.



TWO of the roads must in any case be gone over twice. The two shortest were obviously D to E and I to J. If we start from B and take the following route, ending at G, we shall have contrived to make those two short roads the ones gone over twice, and have thus found the shortest possible route: BAJIJKDE DCBKLGFELIHG, as indicated by the dotted line in the diagram.

704.—A CURIOUS PROGRESSION.

THE answer is $\lfloor 1$, $\lfloor 2$, $\lfloor 3$, $\lfloor 4$, $\lfloor 5 = 153$. This "factorial" sign, of course, means $\lfloor 4 = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 = 24$, etc.

705.—THE "ANTIQUE" SHOP.

THE ten missing words in their order are, CAREST, CARTES, TRACES, CASTER, RECAST, RACEST, CARETS, CATERS, CRATES, REACTS. As one of the words rhymed with "past," we could make a pretty safe guess that three of the letters were A S T, and as one rhymed with "facts," we get the additional C in A C T S. Then the word following "thou" may be expected to end in E S T, which gives us the E. As we now have five out of the six letters, E A C T S, the R is at once found and the ten words constructed. "Caret," ʌ, is a mark used in writing to indicate the omission of a word or words.

706.—TWO CONUNDRUMS.

THE first is the word WHOLE-SOME. In the second case the islanders are Cingalese (single E's).

"It isn't a life at all, it's slavery, and I'm sick of it! I'm going to cut adrift. I'm twenty—I shall be an old woman soon!"

ROBBER'S ROUND

by

HAROLD STEEVENS

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

JANE ALETHEA MARGARET HOPE-SANDERDYKE unpinned her shabby leather hat and tossed it on to the bed.

"I can't stand it any longer, Susie. I'm going to clear out."

"What on earth do you mean, Janey?"

"Just what I say. I've had enough of it and I'm going."

"Going where?"

"Anywhere. I'm going to take a place. I'd rather be a charwoman and scrub doorsteps than live this rotten life any longer."

"Janey! How can you be so wicked!"

The two sisters were talking in their tiny bedroom, the only place in the house where they could ever escape from the devouring interest displayed by every member of the family in everything that every other member of it ever said or did.

"Living on mother and John! Fagging all day long and not a penny to show for it! Not allowed to have an opinion of our own on any mortal thing! Not expected to say a word that John doesn't agree with! And mother backs him up: the boys are everything—always have been—and the girls nothing. What chance have we ever had to earn a living?"

"Janey, how can you say such things!"

"Oh, it isn't a life at all, it's slavery, and I'm sick of it! I'm going to cut adrift. I'm twenty—I shall be an old woman soon!"

The family of Hope-Sanderdyke is an old one; the family seat is Sanderdyke in Glintshire. Perhaps one should say *was*, because ten years ago, when Jane Alethea Margaret was likewise ten, her father died

prematurely while his plans for transferring the family fortunes from an obsolete manorial status to a professional basis more in keeping with the times were still in mid-flight. His fast-growing income died with him, and his widow, left with a quiverful of young children, had no choice but to give up the old place (still cumbered with mortgages), gather what funds she could, and migrate to her native town of Ragston. John, the elder son, was educated with difficulty and found a decent billet in a merchant's office. There was nothing left for educating the girls; the Ragston seminary had to suffice, and if you know Ragston you will know what *that* means.

Jane, the eldest, was lucky in that she had those delirious years of her childhood at Sanderdyke to look back upon. Yet, in another way, her vivid memories were a handicap to her in the life of drab poverty which followed.

To her, at ten, the ancient rambling house with its endless corridors and attics, its twists and turns and ups and downs, was still the rapt domain of mystery and romance; the garden and outhouses, stables, fields, and woods still an inexhaustible paradise of enthralling adventure. And so she always remembered them. The contrast between that early scene of her life's drama and the dingy, dusty, cramped little house, where spirits drooped, personality faded, and solitude was an unattainable joy, sometimes drove her frantic.

IT was at breakfast one day, not long after her outburst to placid Susanna, that she made her startling announcement:—

"I'm going back to Sanderdyke!"

"Janey, what *do* you mean?" Mrs. Hope-Sanderdyke lived in constant apprehension of her eldest daughter's erratic decisions.

"Poor child—gone mad at last!" Euphrosyne, youngest and cheekiest of the sisters, proffered flippant sympathy. "How does it feel, darling?"

"The Briggses want a cook."

A peal of laughter greeted this witty sally. Jane went on seriously:—

"It's ninety pounds a year—and 'all found,'" she added with unction.

"Janey dear, what nonsense you are talking!"

"It's not nonsense, mother, it's in the paper. I'm going to write for it—and I shall get it; I feel it in my bones!"

John snorted—and eased his collar round his throat.

"You will do nothing of the kind, my child!" Her mother spoke with dignity. "The idea of a Hope-Sanderdyke going out as a cook—I never heard of such a thing! And at Sanderdyke of all places! Preposterous!" And she dismissed the absurdity as done with, once and for all. It was not the first of Jane's wild projects she had had to nip in the bud.

Nevertheless, this time the nip was ineffectual, except in so far as it may have prompted Jane to suppress the family name and subscribe herself "Maggie Sanders"—quite a "cookish" name, she decided. For write she did to Mrs. William Briggs, and by some whim of fortune she got the place. ("I like this letter, Will—so respectful and nicely put—almost like a lady! I'll chance the references.")

Let us pass over the consternation, indignation, recrimination, reconciliation, tears, and hugs which preceded Jane's departure for the home of her childhood—to be a cook! And a Hope-Sanderdyke! Dear, dear!

Jane had flutterings lest she should be recognized. She need not have troubled. The old folk were gone, the young ones grown out of knowledge; and nobody at all thought of looking for the tomboy girl of ten with cherry cheeks and flying hair—a Hope-Sanderdyke, moreover, of lustrous memory—in the pale young woman in black who got down from a third-class carriage, left her box for the village carrier, and walked quietly away on foot.

You might think she was to be pitied, coming back in such humble guise to the home of her ancestors, where generations of Sanderdykes had dwelt in pride. Not a bit of it! Jane was as happy as a queen. Even as she tramped up the elm avenue, taking to the turf for the blessed feeling of it under her feet (and to save her shoes), the burden of her twenty years slipped from her and the spring of girlhood came back into her limbs and heart. She could have danced for joy.

The rooks were flapping in across the park.

"You are coming *home*, dears, and so am I!" she whispered.

When she turned the bend and the old pile came in sight she wanted to fall on her knees. The place was just the same, except for the aerials on the roof and the quick leap of electric lights in the windows as the dusk fell: in the old days it was lamps.

THE dinner had been a great success. Jane, born cook that she was, and concerned above all things for the honour of Sanderdyke, had exceeded herself in culinary enterprise. The guests, intrigued by Mrs. Briggs's artless boastings, had insisted that the "lady cook" be sent for to drink a glass of wine with them in the old-fashioned way. Jane (called "Maggie"), aghast at

the prospect of meeting face to face the friends of better days, but bound of course to play up to her good mistress, had run upstairs just as she was in her neat white *chef's* overall covering her from throat to knee and the starched *chef's* cap hiding her hazel hair—and thankful for the disguise.

A pretty little speech from the doyen of the county, old Colonel Pickering (he used to shoot the coverts with her father), a sip of wine, and it was all over. But as she fled she had caught Gerard Marchant's gaze fixed thoughtfully on her face. They were famous playmates once, he and she, joint-adventurers in many a reckless exploit ; and though he was a grown man now, broad and bronzed, the firm, kind features had not changed a whit in plan.

The party had been invited to dine and " listen in," then stay the night. Mr. Briggs's wireless installation was the best in the county, and he was proud of it. But Jane crept early to bed.

Yet she was wakeful that night. No doubt she was excited and over-tired, but there was something more. For the first time since her return to Sanderdyke she experienced a sense of loss ; hitherto all had been pure gain. She knew that by right of birth and breeding her place was with those others, but that did not trouble her. She liked her work and was conscious of no slur ; on the contrary, she was whole-heartedly thankful that through it she had gained honourable re-establishment in the place which more than any other was " home " to her.

No, it was not that. It was the sense of lost companionship that ached. Facing things frankly, as was her way, she knew that the sight of her old playmate, Gerard Marchant, had stirred her recollection of blithe days when comrades were ever at call and accepted as heedlessly as sunshine and blue skies or any other of life's gifts. In her present station she was alone, and must be so.

THE early dawn was in the sky when she woke suddenly from an uneasy sleep, her senses alert with the conviction that something was wrong. A smell of burning was in her nostrils. Jumping out of bed, she ran to the window and sniffed the morning air, supposing that the gardener might have a couch-fire in the garden. But the outer air was untainted and fresh with the scent of growing things.

She turned back to the bedroom : the burning smell was unmistakable, and so, slipping on her dressing-gown and pushing her feet into her slippers, she opened the door and looked out. A waft of acrid smoke met her in the face, a haze of it floated in the corridor. She ran to the stairs and hurried down to see what was the matter.

Her eyes were stinging when she reached the foot. The great hall was full of smoke, and thickening every moment as fresh clouds rolled in from the passages.

Jane felt for a switch and sprang it, but no light came ; the same with the next—out of action. A wire fused, perhaps, in that house of ancient timbers ! She groped her way to the gong and hammered it, then flew up the short flight to Mrs. Briggs's room and beat on the door.

" There's a fire, ma'am, downstairs somewhere ! "

" Will, the house is on fire ! " she heard her mistress scream.

" Eh—what ? What's that ? House on fire—damn ! " A thud on the floor as the master jumped out of bed.

Somebody was in the hall. She ran downstairs again.

" Is that you, ma'am ? "—the footman's anxious voice.

" No, it's me, Stubbins—Maggie. Jump on your motor-bike and ride to the fire-station as hard as you can scorch. Don't wait a second ! "

Stubbins fled. At any other time he would have tossed his head at the idea of taking orders from the cook, but in this moment of crisis he was thankful to have someone to obey.

Mr. Briggs came storming down like an obfuscated bull—a bulky object with hair standing and gown huddled on anyhow.

" Where is it, Maggie ? Where's the fire ? "

" Somewhere at the back, I think, sir."

He rushed to the telephone, got no answer, dashed it to the floor. Then he flung himself on the extinguisher, tore it from the wall, and charged into the smoke.

Womanlike, Jane's thought was for the children. She ran upstairs again, racing for the nursery. At the top of the first flight a man in pyjamas came tearing barefoot along the smoky corridor.

" Everybody out ? " he shouted when he saw her.

" The children are upstairs."

" Which room ? "

" Next floor—right of the landing."

He whirled past her and leapt up the stairs three at a bound. Even in the dim light she knew him by the cut of his face—by the timbre of his voice too, though she had not heard it for a decade, and by the way he took the stairs. It was her old playmate, Gerard Marchant. Following nimbly, she heard a door crash open.

" Come on, boys—out of it—fly ! House on fire—such a lark—you'll miss the fun if you don't look sharp ! Gowns and slippers—

carry 'em—put 'em on afterwards. Down you go—rush ! "

No second bidding was required. Down they went pell-mell, the four of them, with joyful whoops, hauling their little sister with them—Jane had swept her up from bed in the next room.

" Isn't there a baby somewhere ? "

" Yes, of course—in the nursery up above."

" Where's the staircase ? I've forgotten."

Jane was running already. " End of the corridor, round the corner. I'll show you," she called over her shoulder.

In three strides he overtook her, swept by her like a whirlwind, and spun round the corner out of sight. Gerard Marchant knew the swift terror of fire at first hand ; he had once seen a great native village of the Aruwimi laid in a smoking heap ten minutes after the alarm.

Jane heard him shout ; she also caught the crackle. When she turned the bend three seconds behind him her heart stood still.

Gerard was already at the far end—a dim figure silhouetted in smoke and fire. The staircase before him was a pillar of flame ; the old pitch pine must have burnt up like a candle.

" Is there another staircase ? "

" No."

She saw him step back a pace and gather himself for a rush, shoulders hunched and head down.

" Stop ! " she screamed, as she pelted through the smoke. " You can't do it ! "

" Can't I, by Heavens—and that kid burning up there ! "

His foot was out, his body swinging forward, when she reached him and clutched his arm.

" That you sha'n't—you sha'n't ! " Jane could be a fury too ; she held on like a leech while he wrenched to get free. Then woman's instinct came to her aid ; incidentally, she remembered she was the cook.

" Listen, Mr. Marchant," she reasoned. " Nobody can run through fire like that. And if you did get up you couldn't bring the baby through it, could you ? Come along, quick—we'll get a ladder. The fire is a long way from the nursery yet."

He calmed down and she let his arm go. He saw the force of her argument, though it was some tone of her voice that affected him even more—the faint echo of an old trustworthiness that could not be questioned. The same long-disused chord had stirred in him the night before at dinner. And that reminded him.

" You're Miss Maggie, aren't you ? "

" Yes—Maggie the cook. Please come, Mr. Marchant." She was thankful to get him away.

" I'm afraid I lost my wool a bit. Fire's an awful thing—I'm scared of it."

" It didn't look like it."

IN desperate haste they fled back to the main staircase. Old things long covered must have been stirring unawares in Jane too, because, without thinking of propriety or anything else except the urgent need for speed, she tilted herself on to the baluster-rail and slid down like a streak.

At the first spiral she remembered she was not a child any more and blushed scarlet, but it was too late to stop. Glancing up in a panic of shame, she caught Gerard Marchant's start of astonishment when he saw her sink before his eyes into the smoky well. And then—she blessed him for it !—he, too, flipped a leg over the rail and came swooping after her, just as if he had never grown up either.

Nobody had time to notice, or cared if they did. The parlour-maid was pounding at the doors. The men were running out to see what all the fluster was about. Mr. Briggs had exhausted his extinguisher or given it up as a bad job.

" Sir Robert—Colonel—look after the women and children, will you ? Get them outside," he roared.

" My baby ! Where is my baby ? " Mrs. Briggs came ruffling from her room, her hair still in curling-pins.

" We're going for her now, ma'am ! " Jane scampered away with Gerard.

They were heaving the long ladder from its hooks on the stable wall when the gardener came clumping up from his cottage.

" Here, Joby, help Mr. Marchant with this—the nursery window—quick ! "

Joby hesitated.

" The ladder is rotten, miss. It's never been 'tended to this ten year."

" Never mind—will it reach ? Then we'll risk it. Hurry, man, hurry ! Get it up ! "

As Joby set the heel of the ladder against the wall for the hoist it fell asunder ; three-fourths of the spokes were powder-dry.

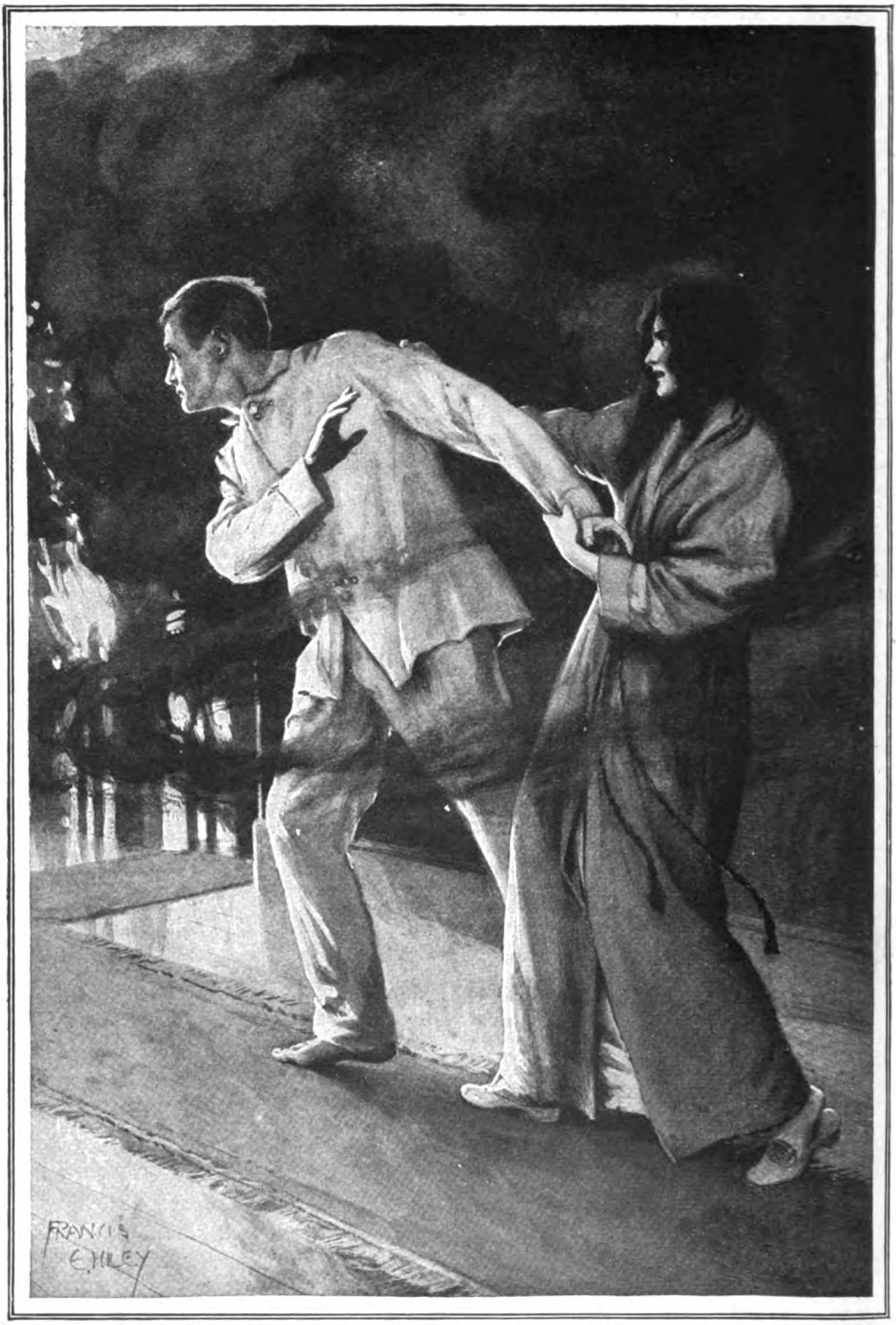
" There, what did I tell ye ? I says to the master, I says——"

" Never mind about that now, Joby. Can you get another anywhere ? Can you borrow one ? "

" There's ne'er a one nearer nor Ligsden, and that be two moile—aye, a *good* two moile."

Gerard Marchant was pacing to and fro in a fever, scanning the face of the mansion for any chance of a climb. A tiny wisp of smoke came drifting through the open nursery window.

" My God ! Look at that ! Isn't there a way of getting up—*wasn't* there some way ? "



"Stop!" she screamed. "You can't do it!"
"Can't I, by Heavens—and that kid burning up there!"

Even in this moment of affrighting stress his "was" thrilled her; it seemed to bridge the gap that the years had made, or at least to narrow it. Perhaps that thrill was the spur to her lagging brain—for the heart is king always.

"Of course there is!"—she looked straight into his face, as he had looked into hers from the dinner-table—"'Robber's Round'!"

She had not thought of it for years—that desperate game of long ago, played only in the wildest moods and severely punishable when detected. "Robber's Round" was primarily a route of escape from durance in the upper regions of the house; she had discovered it herself one wicked afternoon when under sentence of banishment and whimsically christened it. By climbing through sundry windows and utilizing certain exterior features of the building it was possible to work one's way down unobserved from the nursery to the garden without touching the stairs at all. Thereafter the "sailing directions" up or down were treasured as a ritual, and "making the round" became a test for all who were deemed worthy of admission to the freemasonry of Sanderdyke.

"'ROBBER'S ROUND'?" he repeated, vaguely. "Now, what was that?"

The words touched memory's chord once more, but his boyhood's years were buried under the crowding experiences of his after-life at Winchester and Oriel, and then in the dark forests of the Aruwimi River.

She was disappointed.

"I'll show you. Come—it's our only chance!" and as she ran she repeated the first words of the incantation:—

"'Water-butt—over the pigsty—garden wall, mind the snapdragons—conservatory, keep off the glass—blue room window, hope it's open.' We can skip all that, but you have to begin at the beginning or you don't get it right, especially going up."

They dashed into the house. The fire had reached the hall and was licking the balusters. Mr. Briggs and the men were tearing down old pictures from the walls and carrying them out to the lawn.

"Can't we run up another flight?" Gerard panted, when they reached the first landing.

"If you do, you can't work across to the nursery—we've proved that."

Jane gabbled on: "'Into the red room—window-sill—drawing-room balcony—jump across'——"

She climbed out on to the window-sill of the room called "red"; it was not so easy as it used to be, but neither was the step across to the balcony the thrilling leap through space that small legs found it.

"'Through the drawing-room—out front window—climb the veranda—boy goes first—girl can boost him if he's little—he must pull her up, though'——"

Gerard scrambled up the trellised ironwork pillars in a moment, got on to the roof of the veranda, and gave a hand to Jane. To him the whole thing seemed a dream, with the bizarre incident and also the pressing anxiety which are normal in dreams; his unquestioning confidence in her directions seemed nothing to wonder at.

Instead of rattling off the next stage Jane waited an instant to see what he would do. Gerard stooped at once, with his face to the wall. Jane, behind him, clapped her hands silently—he had remembered!

"'Girl stands on boy's shoulder—climbs over parapet—helps him up.'"

Jane was not much enamoured of the prospect, but she put up her foot, and he held her instep firmly to his shoulder, steadying her with his other hand. She sprang off with a swish, light as a bird, and was over the low parapet in a twinkling. When he looked up for a handhold, her arms were already stretching down to him. He did not need them, but the ritual must be observed.

"'Now crawl up the flying buttress—pop through the little round window—and you're up!'"

The callous simplicity of the instruction was belied in its execution. The flying buttress was barely a foot wide, and up there in mid-air the breeze blew freshly; Jane had to clutch. Her dressing-gown hampered her. The last time she made that giddy ascent the order was short skirts—and the nerve of a madcap girl. The sharp edges of dead and gone crustacea protruding from the weather-worn stone cut through to her knees. Worst of all, when Gerard, crawling ahead, reached the *œil-de-bœuf*—the "little round window" of the canticle—he found it utterly impossible to "pop through."

"I can't get through that—I'm not a cat. Now what are we to do?"

Jane's heart sank; she had forgotten the size of the window—it always was a bit of a squeeze. But she called out, briskly:—

"Wait a minute—I expect I can."

Her confident voice and plucky struggle with her difficulties mollified him.

"Come along, Miss Maggie, take my hand!" Who on earth could she be, of all the misty figures of those far-off days? The question flitted across his mind like a cloud shadow on the meadows and was gone.

"Can you get by? Never mind me. We must get through somehow, now we've

got so far, mustn't we ? Wait a second ! " He lay down flat on his chest across the flying buttress, his head and legs dangling. " Now crawl over me. Don't be afraid ; you won't hurt me ! "

Jane crawled.

" Sit tight till I hold you." He gripped her girdle. " Now put up your feet and pop 'em through the window."

Jane could take command herself on occasion, but she liked his tone of authority none the less. Half a minute's wriggling and she was through : hard living had kept her slim enough, poor child !

" Bravo—bravo ! Run quick and fetch the kid. I'll wait for you."

Jane, exultant, darted along to the nursery, slipped in and closed the door behind her. A thin haze of smoke pervaded the room, though nothing like so bad as in the corridor outside. Sleeping calmly in her little cot, just as if all were right with the world, as it always had been up to now, lay the youngest hope of the Briggs family—Graciella, by honour of baptism.

Jane pounced on the mite and drew her out, kissed her for very joy, swathed her in a big shawl, and turned to run —then stood still in horror. In the farther bed, fast asleep, lay Harriet, the nurse. Jane had forgotten all about her,

Leaning out through the little window, she bound the babe to his back with her girdle.

and she realized in a moment that here was the ruin of their plan, in part at least, for the nurse was a large woman, and by no possibility could she get through the bull's-eye window.

The dilemma was too appalling to contemplate. Jane was thankful that instant action was required of her. She left the nurse sleeping and hurried back to the little window.

"Hurrah! Well done, Miss Maggie! Pulled it off after all—good for you! Now we'll be down in two shakes. Hand him out!"

"She's Graciella."

"*Her*, then—I don't care, bless her!" He took the infant cautiously. "Hope I don't drop it—her, I should say."

"I know!" cried Jane; "I'll tie her on your back with my girdle. Then you'll have both your hands free."

"But you are coming too—we can hand her to each other."

"No; I must go back for nurse."

"Nurse!" he cried, aghast. "Is the nurse there too? Can she get through? If she can't, we're done!"

"I'll see to her. You get Gracie down. Turn round quick, there's a good man!"

Leaning out through the little window, she bound the babe to his back with her girdle and passed him the tassels to knot round his chest. Graciella, her small vertebræ bent comfortably forward and her chin resting on his shoulder, was as jolly as a sandboy.

"Off you go! Be careful!"

Jane hastened back to the nursery, roused the nurse—a strapping countrywoman of thirty—and hurried her to the ladder which led through a trap-door to the roof.

She racked her brains to think whether there was any way down that she had forgotten. She made the circuit of the roof. Except for the two stout "radio" poles and the long double wire stretching across the width of the mansion, everything was just as she remembered it—not a chance anywhere! And the village had no fire escape, she knew; high buildings were too few and ladders too plentiful to make it worth while.

A COMMOTION on the lawn below brought her to the parapet. Gerard was running up to Mrs. Briggs with Graciella on his back; the boys were capering and shouting round him. He slipped the knot and the fond mother snatched her darling to her bosom. Gerard broke away at once. He was running for the "Round" again, twining Jane's girdle about his waist, when he heard a halloo and looked up.

When he saw her standing calmly there against the radio mast, in a veil of drifting smoke, and the house burning beneath her, his anger rose at what he took to be a prank of foolhardy bravado.

"Come down, you little fool!" he bawled through his hands.

Jane did not stir, but pointed to the nurse at her side and made a circular motion with her hands to signify the *œil-de-bœuf*. Her clear voice reached him:—

"She can't get through!"

Then Gerard understood. She must have known it when she sent him down and stayed behind herself!

A brave man's admiration for a deed of shining sacrifice swamped all his anger and filled him with remorse. A surge of tenderness for that heroic girl swept over him, and he swore in his heart that she should not die, if he had to tear out the stones of that accursed window with his hands—or the fire which engulfed her should take him to the shades also. He knew she would never come down alone.

"Joby!" He was yelling to the gardener for tools when his eye caught sight of the aerials. From where he stood the two wires, linked together by the "broom-handle," looked exactly like a trapeze suspended horizontally above her head—a cradle ready made, if she could only reach it and use it for her descent in place of a rope!

But the trapeze was lashed to the top of a ten-foot mast. There was another just like it at the other end of the aerials, of course. That end, he knew, was not fixed fast, but was attached to a running cord which passed through a pulley on the farther mast and by which the wire could be lowered to the roof. But, alas! that running cord was manipulated from the landing window, which was inaccessible now to him as to her, nor had she any means of cutting the cord. But——

"Wait!" he shouted.

Rushing to the porch, he plunged into the belching smoke and ran through, bending low, to the gun-room. The place was opaque with stinking fumes, but he knew its geography perfectly. He passed his hands along the rack till he felt the rook rifle; then groped feverishly for ammunition, found it, and stumbled out with eyes streaming and lungs ready to burst.

Drawing deep draughts of fresh air, he sped to the farther wing of the house, where the second radio mast was fixed. He knelt down on the turf, rested the barrel of the rifle on the sundial, and took aim at the cord, between the mast and the trapeze-like wooden "broom-handle" or "spreader" which holds the wires apart.

The shot went wide.

"Barrel oily, of course," he muttered. "Try again."

In the best of conditions it would have been a difficult though not an impossible shot, and now the early light was dim and the atmosphere hazy with a wrack of scurrying smoke, confusing to his vision. Again he aimed and fired with care, saying to himself :—

"That's a hit, if the sighting is right ! "

And so it was, for the cord was oscillating, though not severed. He took a third cartridge from his pocket and slipped it to the breech. It would not go in. He threw it down and took another ; the same thing happened.

He took out the whole lot, box and all, and looked them over ; the box was right, but the cartridges had been mixed, and he saw, to his horror, that of the half-dozen in his hand only one was of the proper calibre !

IT was not the first tight fix in which Gerard Marchant had found himself during the course of his life, when firearms were the only salvation ; but never before had the lives of two human beings in imminent peril of a frightful death depended on a single shot of his. And for one of these he had sworn that his own life should be forfeit.

As warriors of old called upon gods and saints to bear their missiles truly to the mark, so Gerard Marchant's spirit cried out beseechingly that his prowess might not fail. And, strange to say, in that instant the edge of the sun rose up above the horizon, a slant of wind swept off the smoke ; light filled the sky, limning the cord in admirable clarity. Gerard, confident, cool, and steady, pressed the trigger and fired.

Your ancient Greek would have praised Phœbus Apollo ; we speak of luck. But it was a fine feat of mark-manship, whatever be said—a triumph of instant courage and steely nerve. The cord sprang apart, the "spreader" dropped.

Gerard left the rifle and raced back to the west wing.

"The wire—the wire ! " he shouted, pointing as he ran.

Jane had guessed that he had some scheme in hand—she knew his spirit from of old, resourceful and undaunted—and the first rap on the cord had carried to her kindred brain a message clearer than words. Before the "spreader" touched the roof she was running to fetch it, and when Gerard reached the lawn below she had the wooden bar in her hand, with its wires attached. The other end of the long twin wires was dangling from the mast above her head.

She was under no illusion as to the strenuous nature of the task before her, realizing full well that it would tax all her strength and skill to lower the woman safely to the ground. Yet she never thought of flinching. First she whipped the free end of the aerials round the mast, to break the strain. Then, leaning over the parapet, she laid the wooden bar of her "cradle" on the projecting cornice of the roof.

By coaxing and cajolery and dire threats of an awful alternative, she induced the nurse to climb over the parapet and seat herself on the "broom-handle," a wire in either hand, like the ropes of a swing. She stripped the hem from her gown—the girdle was gone—and bound the wires to the trembling woman's sides to hold her in her seat.

That done, Jane stepped back and slipped out of her gown. She wrapped the soft stuff round her hands and arms, then grasped the wires and drew them taut round the shaft of the mast. Leaning backwards and pressing one foot against the mast, she steeled herself for the test. The timber was stout enough, the seven-strand wire strong enough, if she let it run easily—yet not too easily, or the nurse would crash to earth ! Could she manage it ? She must—she *must !*

"Wriggle yourself off, Harriet ! I'm holding you—you sha'n't fall ! "

Small blame to any woman for shrinking from that abyss ; the nurse on her trapeze turned sick with fear.

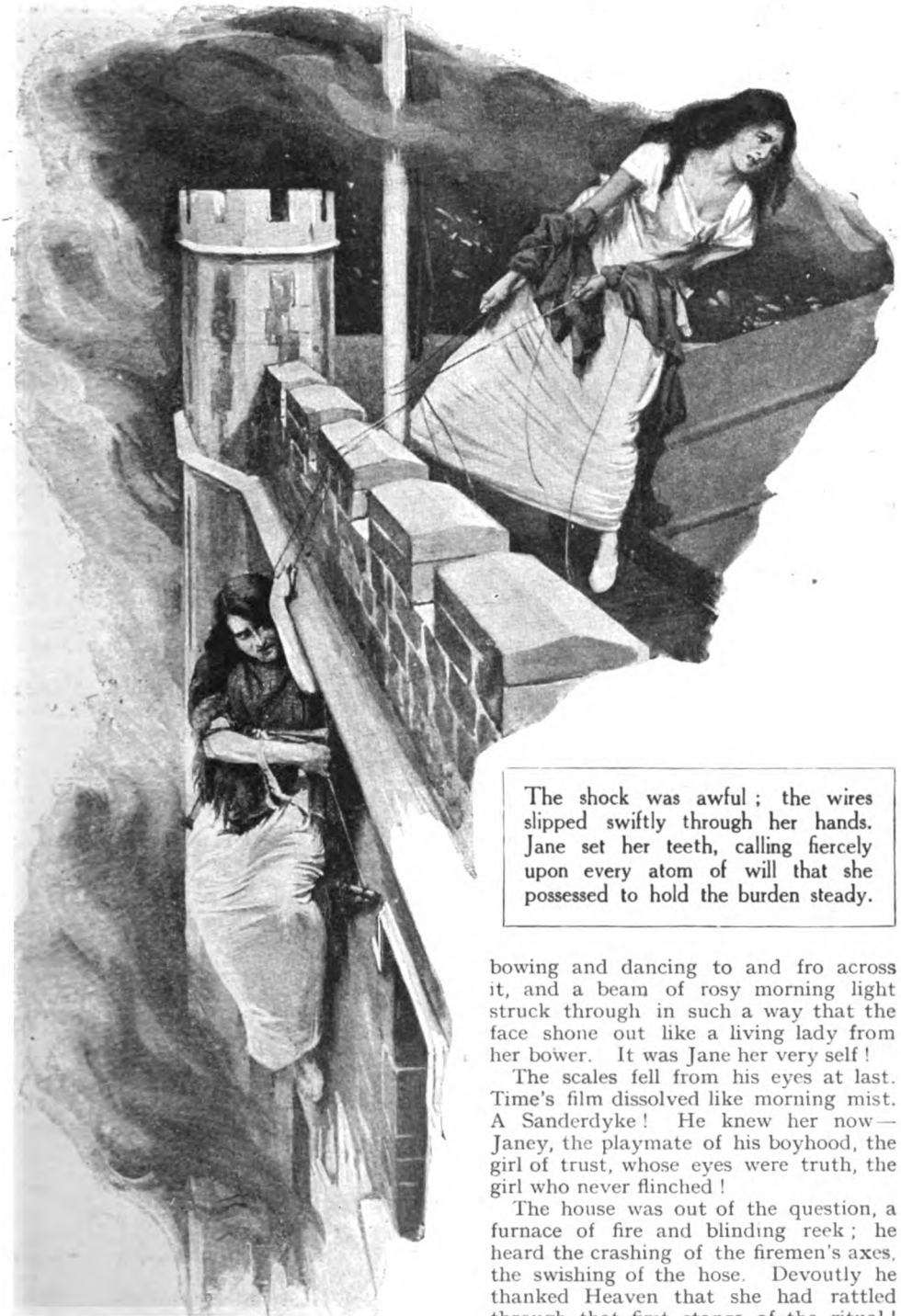
"Go on, Harriet—shut your eyes ! You must ! You'll burn to ashes if you don't, and never see the baby again. I'm holding fast, I tell you. Now ! "

The shock was awful ; the wires slipped swiftly through her hands. Jane set her teeth and flung back her head till she saw the leads behind her, calling fiercely upon every atom of will that she possessed to hold the burden steady. But the bind of those thin wires on her arms was excruciating—an agony of fiery knives slicing her flesh ! Tears burst from her eyes. She could not bear it—not an instant longer—she must let go ! She screamed in torture.

Her scream was smothered by a shout from below. Then the wires slacked—ah, Heaven's own mercy ! She sank shuddering on the leads.

Gerard meanwhile, grieved to the marrow that such a task must needs be left to her—a *tour de force* to test the resolution of a vigorous man—waited only to see Harriet safely lowered, then rushed back to the 'Round' to help the brave girl down. Little he guessed how much her feat had cost her !

The men had stacked the pictures round the lawn haphazard, some heirloom portraits of the ancestral Sanderdykes among them. And, as Gerard darted past, he spied one which brought him sharply to a standstill. The old picture was leaning against a trellis of rambler roses ; the flowery racemes were



The shock was awful ; the wires slipped swiftly through her hands. Jane set her teeth, calling fiercely upon every atom of will that she possessed to hold the burden steady.

bowing and dancing to and fro across it, and a beam of rosy morning light struck through in such a way that the face shone out like a living lady from her bower. It was Jane her very self !

The scales fell from his eyes at last. Time's film dissolved like morning mist. A Sanderdyke ! He knew her now— Janey, the playmate of his boyhood, the girl of trust, whose eyes were truth, the girl who never flinched !

The house was out of the question, a furnace of fire and blinding reek ; he heard the crashing of the firemen's axes, the swishing of the hose. Devoutly he thanked Heaven that she had rattled through that first stanza of the ritual ! Whatever the record for the " Round " had been in olden time, Gerard beat it hollow now.

Robber's Round

He was up and over the pigsty in three leaps, sped along the high garden wall, trampling recklessly on the snapdragons; crawled up the conservatory skylight with a smash of panes; dived through the blue-room window into choking smoke, through to the red room, out on the window-sill, cross to the balcony, rush through the drawing-room, up the veranda, over the low parapet, up the flying buttress——

And there he found her, the blessed darling, whimpering under the *œil de-bœuf*, her face grimy with smoke and seamed by her tears, her hazel hair in a tangle, her hands grooved deep where the running wires had bitten, her slippers gone Heaven knows where, and her scorched gown in shreds and tatters. Her crippled arms hung limp and her nerves had collapsed.

"Never mind, little Janey!" He was back in the old days himself now, heart and soul, and she was the tomboy girl in a pickle. "Never mind, girlie. Look! I've brought back your girdle!"

He unwound it from his waist and tied it round hers, slipping it through the loops and drawing her gown together reverently.

"There never was such a splendid girl, never—such a brave, brave Janey! And this stupid never knew her—and she knew him all the time, now didn't she—the little puss?"

He took her cold hands and warmed them in his, coaxing her with baby talk, until he saw the courage leap back into her eyes. Then he stood up beside her on the flying buttress, stooped, and lifted her in his arms. Pace by pace, his bare feet gripping the rough stonework and his eyes fixed straight ahead, he carried her down through sweeping smoke and vicious flame-tongues cheated of their prey—he'd have carried a girl like that from the pit of doom to the stars above!

Still as a mouse, she nestled on his shoulder, never a fear in her heart. Near the foot of the buttress, where the gradient fell steeply he set her down, then slipped off himself and reached up for her again. And so, lifting and carrying, he brought her safely to earth.

To earth, did I say? Nay, to heaven!

He *said* he had loved her all his life, and she, the dear, would not dispute that charming fable. Besides, perhaps he had—who knows? Men are so forgetful.

"Look, Janey, look!" Gerard cried, joyfully.

The little chap was making the traverse of his father's shoulders and holding on powerfully by the paternal hair.

"Wow, you rascal! He's a Sanderdyke right enough! That's Sanderdyke, Janey!"

Jane Alethea Margaret Marchant beamed lovingly on the romping pair.

"Oho! Marchant too, darling. Make the 'Round,' my bonnie man—'Robber's Round'!"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 132.

QUEEN of old days, half mythical her fame;
Queen of more modern times, a glorious name.

1. My light would none desire who value health:
   My light is mine—who would not like its wealth?
2. The word describes a square: 'twould be amiss
   To think four-sided figures must be this.
3. Grove island changes final letter: say
   What follows next, three hundred miles away.
4. A serf, a cook, whose pudding, all agreed,
   Was the most dainty item in the feed.
5. Her name, with luck, may well occur to mind.
   Knowledge of French essential you will find.
6. Clearly, unwisely, yonder, truly, so,
   Particularly, very, oft, ago.
7. To mineral add tail, a man is met.
   What was his trisyllabic epithet?
8. Grave business must our subject be, 'tis true.
   In time half what is often grave we view.
9. Of Lapland think, the Alps, and Canada—
   Also of Waterford and Kandahar.

PAX.

———

Answers to Acrostic No. 132 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on July 10th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 131.

(The Third of the Series.)

A RATTLING game for those who like a racket.
If you have skill, you're challenged here to back it.

1. Hence, in the middle, we make linen fine.
2. Long before this, we take for Auld Lang Syne.
3. The morse, except one letter, we can read.
4. Not in our time, nor any time, indeed.
5. This cardinal goes just before eleven.
6. 'Tis solved with ease, if once the answer's given.
7. Rule. Conqueror, with an extra, is disclosed.
8. This the stiff-necked have rigidly disposed.
9. Though simple, welcome here we look to find.
10. What's fate to France is to the English kind.

EDI.

1. L	i n	T
2. A	g	O
3. W	a l r	U
4. N	e v e	R
5. T	e	N
6. E	n i g m	A
7. N	o r	M
8. N	a p	E
9. I	n	N
10. S	o r	T

NOTES.—Light 2. Long ago. 3. Walrus. 7. Norm-an.

———

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply

The Lesson
of a Great Export Trade

EARLY MORNING. THE POOL OF LONDON.

THE history of the overseas trade in ENO'S "Fruit Salt" is unique and bears eloquent witness to the worth which the world of men and women find in ENO.

ENO may be said to-day to have passed into the select company of things indispensable to the well-being and happiness of men and women in every clime. It is the proven safeguard of health.

The lesson is plain : to maintain good health, to prevent internal disorders due to faulty digestion, to counteract rheumatic tendencies, choose ENO'S "Fruit Salt" for the purpose, because you can depend upon it with full confidence.

This is the golden rule of health : first thing every morning drink a glass of water (warm or cold), sparkling with a 'dash' of ENO.

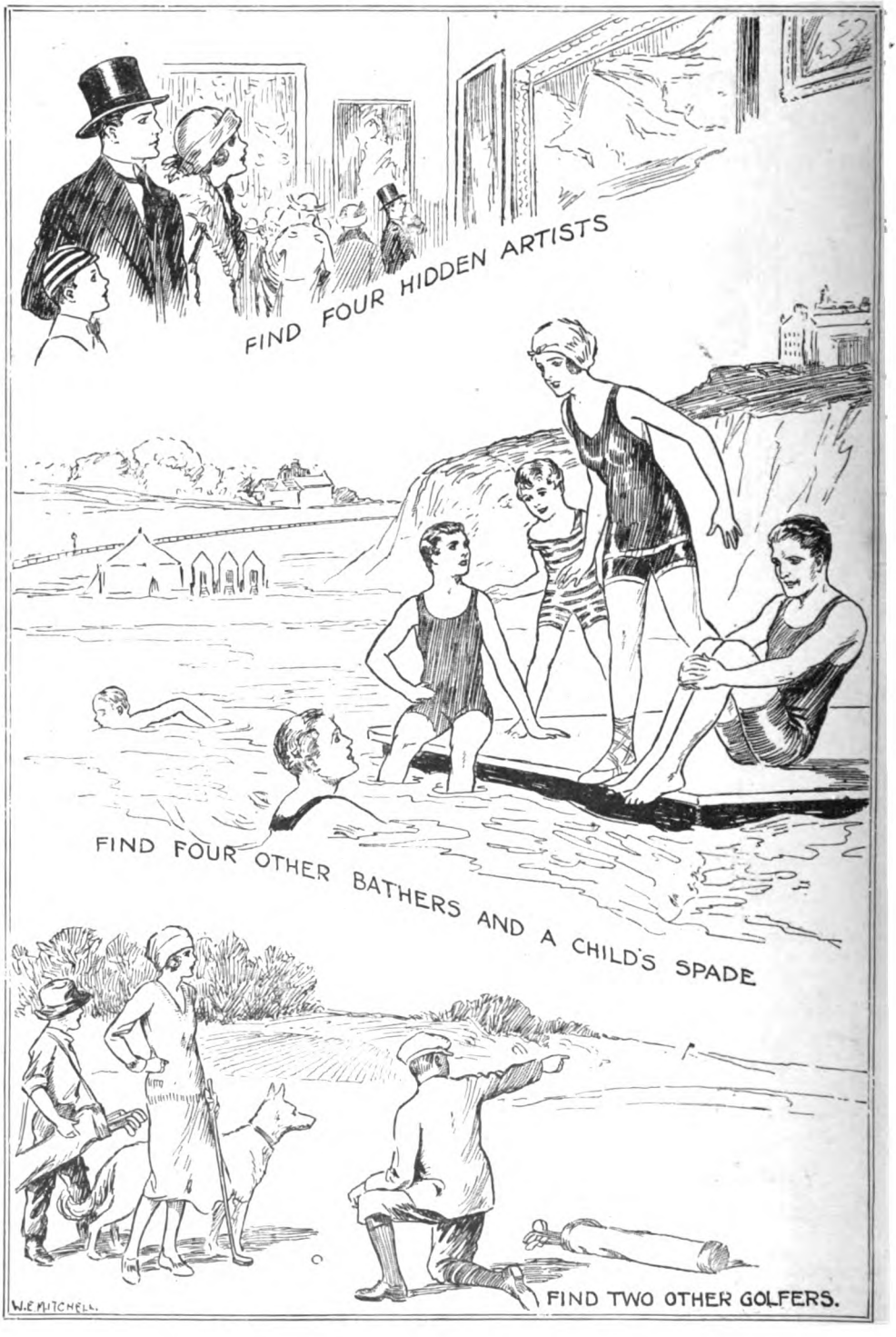
In whatever part of the globe you buy ENO, you can be sure that it will be precisely the same composition, in the same perfect condition, with the same unsurpassed health-giving qualities. And it's always a pleasure to drink

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT"
TRADE MARK

The World-Famed Effervescent Saline

Visitors to the British Empire Exhibition are cordially invited to call at the ENO Kiosk, No. 1, King's Way West.

CAN YOU FIND THEM?



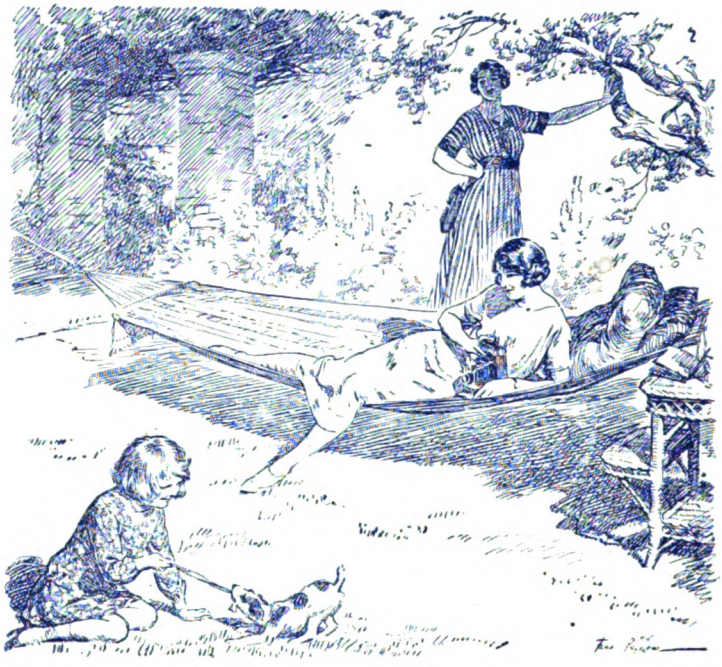
AUG

OLIDAY FICTION NUMBER

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

"SAPPER" · BERTRAM ATKEY
W. L. GEORGE · LYNN DOYLE

The Humours of Wireless



Holidays worth spending are worth saving

There are two ways of spending your holiday. The one, the unsafe way, is to trust to your hazy recollections; another, the safe and easier way, is to use a "Kodak." A "Kodak" preserves for you in picture form the glorious scenes, the fun, the people, the places and all that makes a holiday worth while. Take a "Kodak" with you *this* year.

Happy people, pleasant places: record them with your

"Kodak"

Ask your nearest Kodak dealer to show you the latest models.

Have you seen the 'Kodak Magazine'? Price 2d. monthly, 3/- a year post free.

"What is a Kodak"? Don't imagine that every small camera is a "Kodak." The word "Kodak" is the exclusive property and trade mark of the Kodak Company, and cannot lawfully be used to describe products not made or supplied by them. And don't imagine that every film that will fit your "Kodak" is a Kodak Film—every film made by the Kodak Company bears the name on the carton and on the end of the spool. "Kodaks" and Kodak Films are made by the Kodak Company and by nobody else. Look for the name "Kodak" on your Camera and Films.

Kodak Ltd., Kingsway, London, W.C.2

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for August, 1924.

The rights of translation and reproduction in the contents of this number are strictly reserved.

Frontispiece: "And then he staggered back and leaned against the table. A black-bearded man was standing in the doorway."

		PAGE
THE KING OF HEARTS Illustrations by J. Dewar Mills.	"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)	111
THE SQUARE DIAMOND Illustrations by John Campbell.	W. L. GEORGE	120
THE PEMBERTON BOY Illustrations by E. G. Oakdale.	ALBERT KINROSS	129
THE MIND OF THE RACE-HORSE Do Horses Think? Illustrations from Photographs.	EDGAR WALLACE	140
MY PRETTY COUSIN Illustrations by Norah Schlegel.	DENIS MACKAIL	147
CAPRICORN Illustrations by Alfred Leete.	LYNN DOYLE	158
BETTY BALFOUR A Personal "Close-up" of Britain's Favourite Film Star Illustrations from Photographs.	FENN SHERIE	166
A SENSE OF THE FUTURE Illustrations by Frank Gillett, R.I.	MARTIN SWAYNE	174
QUICK WORK BY PHILIP Illustration by P. B. Hickling.	R. L. LURIE	184
THE HUMOURS OF WIRELESS Illustrations from Drawings.		192
"N" FOR NELSON Illustrations by C. E. Brock, R.I.	BERTRAM ATKEY	197
ACROSTICS		210
THE TERRIBLE AUNT Illustrations by A. Bailey.	DAVID DEVANT	211
PERPLEXITIES	HENRY E. DUDENEY	214

THE STRAND MAGAZINE is printed by the Newnes and Pearson Printing Co., Ltd., N. Kensington, and published monthly by the Proprietors, George Newnes, Ltd., 8 to 11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, England. Subscription price to any part of the world, post free, for one year, 15s. (Canada, 13s. 6d.). Registered at the General Post Office for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York, N.Y., Post Office. Cases for binding volumes of THE STRAND MAGAZINE may be obtained to order from Booksellers for 2s. 6d., or post free for 2s. 10d. direct from the Office. Half-yearly Volumes, 7s. 6d. net.

Sole Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch (Asia), Ltd. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd. American Agents: The International News Company, 83 and 85, Duane Street, New York.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS.—MSS. and Drawings must be submitted at the owner's risk, and the Editor will not guarantee their safety, though when stamps are enclosed he will endeavour to return them. MSS. should be typewritten. All contributions paid for on acceptance.

The Index to Volume 67 can be obtained on application to the Publisher.

Most of the Original Drawings of the Illustrations in this Magazine are for sale. Terms may be had on application to the Cliche Department, George Newnes, Ltd., 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

"Luvisca" REGISTERED

SHIRTS PYJAMAS and SOFT COLLARS

hold a distinctive *freshness*, despite frequent washing. Not easily crumpled or soiled, more durable than silk—at far less cost—they ensure dignity and comfort by day and night.

If any difficulty in obtaining, write COURTAULDS, LTD. (Dept. 17M), 19, Aldermanbury, London, E.C.2, for name of your nearest retailer and descriptive booklet.

The "LUVISCA" Name Tab on each garment is your guarantee. None Genuine Without.

GAMAGES

The LARGEST MAIL ORDER HOUSE in the WORLD.

The tremendous Advantage of Buying Direct from a House like Gamages, with Half-a-Century's Reputation for GOOD VALUE and HONEST DEALING, is manifest to "Strand Magazine" Readers all over the World. Whatever your needs there's a Gamage Catalogue to help you get it.

GAMAGES OFFER OF SUPER GRADE RIDING

BREECHES

Cut on the very latest lines by Expert Breeches Tailors. Legs strapped self material and laced at knee. Made in the world-famous

Govt. KHAKI DRILL

Perfect Fitting. Wash like a collar.

WEAR LIKE WIRE.

Send for PATTERNS, post free on application.
When ordering give waist measurement and height. 30 to 40in. waist in stock.

Price per pair, Post Free.
Two pairs for **24/-** **12/6**

32/6 Boots for 19/11

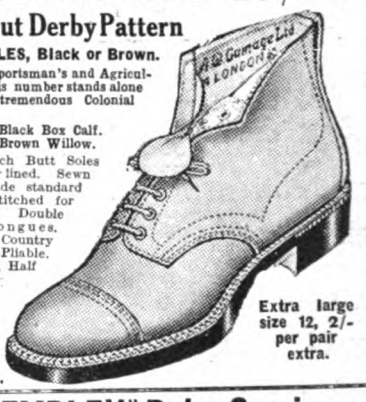
Men's Stout Derby Pattern

IN TWO STYLES, Black or Brown.

As a Shooting, Sportsman's and Agriculturist's Boot, this number stands alone for value. In tremendous Colonial Demand.

No. H99. Black Box Calf.
No. H100. Brown Willow.

Both have ½-inch Butt Soles and are leather lined. Sewn heel seats made standard screwed and stitched for extra strength. Double Waterproof Tongues. Grand Boots for Country Wear. Soft and Pliable. In all Sizes and Half Sizes, 6 to 11.

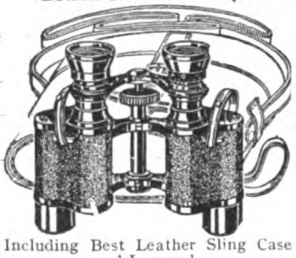


Per Pair **19/11** **POST FREE.**

Extra large size 12, 2/- per pair extra.

Prism BINOCULARS

Brand New Goods (Not Reconditioned).



Very powerful Glasses. Magnification x 8. Diameter of object glasses 22mms. Central screw focussing, independent adjustment for 1 eyepiece and jointed bar for width adjustment between eyes.

Including Best Leather Sling Case and Lanyard.

PRICE **49/6** POST FREE.

Our New List of Prism Binoculars sent Post Free.

The "WEMBLEY" Baby Carriage

De Luxe Model at a Low Price **15/-** **DOWN** and six monthly **Payments of 11/-**

Delivery on First Payment.

Full size, handsome comfortable carriage with wired on tyres and tubular handle. All modern improvements. Dark blue finish, suède upholstered. Complete with Apron and Brake.

CASH PRICE 75/-

Photographs, Order Form and full specification free on application.

21-Piece China Tea Sets.

Very best quality THIN CHINA, with artistic and dainty Spray of Pink Roses as decoration, beautifully finished with Gilt edge. Good size cups. Complete Service. Price **9/11**

Quantity of Best Quality English Bone China TEA SETS, in choice artistic Pink and Blue Border Designs, finished two Gilt lines. Also Black and Pink Rose Border. 21 Pieces. Usually 25/6. Sale Price **17/11**

Inland Part Packing and Carriage 1/6 extra.

8/6 Monthly

Less than 4d. a Day!

Britain's Best Bicycle at the price,

THE ALL-BRITISH POPULAR,

brand new, spick and span. Can be yours NOW! **15/-** down secures Delivery, and you ride as you pay. Actual Terms: Gents' **15/-** down; 12 payments of 8/6. Ladies' **16/-** down; 12 payments of 9/-. Complete with Pump, Tools & Bag. Sizes: 27, 24, or 26-in. Frames. *CATALOGUE POST FREE.*

Cash £5 5 9

GAMAGES
HOLBORN, LONDON. E.C.1

WRITE FOR FREE SPECIFICATION & ORDER FORM.

Address your Orders and Enquiries, also Catalogue Applications, direct to

A. W. GAMAGE, LTD., HOLBORN, LONDON, E.C.1.

For Orders from Abroad the Carriage is Extra.

To face back of Frontispiece.

THE
STRAND
MAGAZINE
August, 1924.

AND THEN HE STAGGERED BACK AND LEANED AGAINST THE TABLE. A BLACK-BEARDED MAN WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY.

(See page 117.)

THE KING OF HEARTS

by

"SAPPER" (H.C.McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

"I ASSURE you, Sir John, it's exactly what we want."

Mr. Dicker, chief Unionist agent for the constituency, rubbed his hands together, and contemplated the prospective Unionist candidate seated in a chair opposite.

"Exactly what we want," he repeated. "Mark you, Sir John"—he lifted his hand as if to forestall any objections that might be raised—"it will have to be done with care from every point of view. Nothing could be more repugnant to a man in your position than the slightest suspicion that you were in any way boasting."

Sir John Perton nodded decisively.

"And that is precisely what we shall avoid," went on the other, calmly. "Again, we must avoid giving the other side any chance of saying that we are merely drawing a red herring across the electors' track. Of course that is precisely what we are doing, but that's a detail. It will therefore have to come not in any sense as an interview with you, but in a brief account of your career and life. And young Titmarsh in the *Mercury* here is the very man to do it. He writes an At Random column every week as well as his other work, and it's there we'll have the episode of cutting that pack of cards emphasized. It will appear as a detail in the account of your life: it can be magnified when it's taken out and put in the column. It's gorgeous, Sir John—gorgeous. And I wouldn't be surprised if we didn't get you in on it. Besides, it will give us all something to talk about when we go round canvassing. The man who drew the four of spades! Gambling with death! I'll get Titmarsh now—this instant."

He clapped on a hat and dashed to the door: in all his movements Mr. Dicker strongly resembled a terrier after a rat.

"Just think out the story, Sir John: plenty of human interest. All that bit about the water and the pitiless sun and the natives crawling around. And then your gamble with Mr. What's-his-name on the top of the hill. Gorgeous!"

He darted from the room, and Sir John Perton rose from his chair and crossed to the window.

But it is doubtful if he saw anything: if the men unloading barrels from a big brewer's van opposite made any impression on his brain. For he was back in West Africa on that cursed little show—the show that Mr. Dicker described as gorgeous. He could feel that scorching heat again: he could hear that terrible scream which one of the men gave as he went mad and blew out his brains: he could see—God! would he ever cease to see the blazing, hideous scorn in Bill Meyrick's face? With a sudden shiver he passed his hand over his forehead and found it wet.

He swore angrily under his breath: this would never do. The thing was over and done with: buried beneath two years of time. Much water had flowed under the bridge in those two years: his uncle and his first cousin had both been killed in a motor accident, and he had come into a baronetcy which he'd never expected. From being a comparatively impecunious officer in a line regiment he had become owner of River Park, with an income up in the fifty thousands. And so he'd chucked the service, and now he was taking to politics.

He was young—still on the right side of thirty-five: ambitious: good-looking. And the path of life is smooth for a good-looking, unmarried baronet with fifty thousand a year. People prophesy smooth things in such cases, and, strange to say, are generally justified in so doing. Certainly the path that stretched ahead of John Perton seemed very much the primrose one. If only he could forget: if only—— His fists clenched in his pockets: he *would* forget. He had forgotten till that fool Dicker had unearthed the story from Bimbo Charteris, second-in-command of his old regiment, and now staying with him at River Park. He had

Copyright, 1924, by H. C. McNeile.

forgotten: except just sometimes when Bill Meyrick's face came to him out of the darkness. At night, when he couldn't sleep, he'd see it and curse it foolishly.

And yet he was perfectly safe. Nothing could ever happen: the cupboard of this particular skeleton was his brain. Bill Meyrick was dead: of that there could be no doubt. Even Monica was beginning to accept it now. And that reminded him—he was lunching with Monica to-day.

He glanced at his watch as he heard footsteps on the stairs outside. Twelve o'clock: he'd give this reporter fellow half an hour, and then—Monica. She liked him, he knew: wasn't he Bill Meyrick's best friend? And she'd been engaged to Bill. But Bill had died two years ago.

"This is Mr. Titmarsh, Sir John," announced Dicker.

"Pleased to meet you, Sir John," said the reporter, taking the proffered hand. "From the little Mr. Dicker has told me, it seems to me we've got the goods. And if we've got the goods you can rely upon yours truly to put 'em across."

"I have explained to Mr. Titmarsh, Sir John," said Mr. Dicker a little hastily, "that it will have to be done in the most tactful way. There is nothing a soldier dislikes more than appearing to buck about what he's done."

"A proof shall be sent to you, Sir John, before it's inserted in the paper," announced Titmarsh. "And if there's a word in it that offends you—strike it out."

"I am sure that won't be necessary, Mr. Titmarsh," remarked Sir John. "But really, you know, there is very little to tell. The thing was quite a trifling affair."

"It's good enough for us, Sir John," said Dicker, firmly. "Now, if you just run over the story, Titmarsh will make notes."

With a slight shrug of his shoulders Sir John Perton sat down and lit a cigarette. After all—why not? If he didn't, Charteris would. Tell the story, and tell it well: he was quite a good raconteur if he chose to exert himself.

"We were on detachment," he began, "half a company of the Royal Loamshires. There were three officers and ninety men—holding a strong point. We took up our position at midday on a Tuesday, with the understanding that we should be relieved the following day. There was no sign of any natives when we got there—everything seemed perfectly peaceful. And yet by Tuesday evening we were completely surrounded. The way the natives had used the scrub as cover was simply amazing. We never saw a sign of them until we realized they were all around us. Even then we didn't see them, except one here and there. We only knew by the firing.

"You must realize that we were on a little conical hill: the sort of position that is a death-trap if there is any artillery about, but we knew the natives had none. Away to the east was a range of low foothills, and we knew relief would come from that direction next day. And until it came all we had to do was to hang on, which we didn't anticipate would prove difficult. Without artillery the natives had but little chance of dislodging us.

"We assumed they would try and rush us that night, and they did. But we'd withdrawn all the outlying pickets and formed a sort of Cæsar's camp at the top of the hill, and we beat them off easily."

Sir John was beginning to enjoy himself: the attention of his audience flattered him.

"Wednesday came and Wednesday went, with its pitiless tropical sun, and still no sign of relief. Except for a little desultory sniping the natives didn't trouble us, but they were still there. And they remained there all Wednesday night, though they didn't try to attack us again. But we were beginning to look at one another, we three officers, and wonder. There had been a good deal of ammunition expended on Tuesday night, and if something had delayed the regiment seriously—what was going to happen? It was pretty obvious that the natives thought they'd got us, and they weren't going to be such fools as to lose their lives attacking us, when all they had to do was to sit tight and starve us out.

"You see, that was the trouble. Food and, worse still—far worse—water. Thursday night—no relief, and the situation was critical. We'd heard sounds of intermittent firing from beyond the hills, but that was all. Came Friday, and the water question had become sheer hell. We had one petrol tin left with an armed guard over it.

"The commanding officer had taken one in the arm, and we were up against it good and proper. We had about ten rounds a man left when the ammunition was equalized out, and by Saturday morning it was reduced to five. They very nearly got us that night."

Sir John paused for a while: undoubtedly he was telling the yarn well.

"It was about midday on Saturday that Captain Seymour, who was in command, came to a decision. He called Mr. Meyrick—the other officer—and me to him in a little sandy bit at the top of the hill which we'd turned into company headquarters, and he put things to us straight. Not that it was necessary: we knew already.

"'We may be able to hold out for one more night,' he said, 'but after that it's

impossible. There will be no ammunition left—and no water. If the regiment comes to-day—well and good: if it doesn't come to-morrow, it's the end. Something must have delayed them, of course, but it's possible that they don't know the desperate position we're in. I therefore propose that one of you two should undertake the forlorn hope of getting through to the regiment. They must be over there beyond the hills.'

"I remember he wouldn't look at either of us.

"'It's the most damnable thing I've ever had to do in my life,' he went on. 'Being in command here I cannot go myself, and I take it hard that I have to suggest to one of you two what is practically certain death. Oh! God! listen to that.'

"It was one of the signallers who'd gone mad and was screaming for water. He blew out his brains ten minutes later.

"'Practically certain death,' he went on. 'But I cannot disregard the fact that there is one chance in a thousand of whoever goes getting through. And it is my bounden duty not to neglect that chance. I also cannot disregard the fact that it's certain death for all of us to-morrow night if the regiment doesn't come. Therefore I must ask you to decide between yourselves which of you shall make the attempt.'

"He left it at that, and Mr. Meyrick and I drew lots. We left it till a bit later, and then we cut. It was ace high—high goes, and he drew the ten of diamonds. I drew the four of spades."

He paused for a moment and stared out of the window.

"And that's about all."

"But did Mr. Meyrick get through, Sir John?" cried Titmarsh, excitedly.

Sir John Perton shook his head a little sadly.

"That's the devil of it. He was my best friend, and it's two years ago since it happened. He's never been heard of since. And the cruel part is that had he waited all would have been well. Just as the sun was going down and the final rays were on the foothills we'd been watching so eagerly, I saw the flash of a heliograph. It was our relief."

He got up and crossed to the window.

"This is Mr. Titmarsh, Sir John," announced Dicker.

"They came next morning, and there were twenty of us left. Captain Seymour had been killed by a chance bullet in the night, and they'd seen no sign of Mr. Meyrick."

He swung round a little deliberately.

"You will understand, gentlemen, that in many ways it is a very personal story. And I therefore must beg of you to treat it as such. I don't want there to be any hint,

for instance, that I am the source of your information. There are, of course, many people in the regiment who know the story, and from whom you might have heard it. I would be obliged if you would let it be implied that that is how you got it."

"But of course," cried Mr. Dicker. "My dear Sir John, it would lose half its value if anyone had an inkling that you were our informant."

"Of course," echoed Titmarsh. "Leave it entirely to me, Sir John."

"I will," said the prospective candidate, with a pleasant smile. "And now, if you will excuse me, I have a small luncheon party. Good-day. Back at three, Dicker."

"GORGEOUS," said Titmarsh as the door closed. "You were right, Mr. Dicker. Blazing sun: thirst: ammunition running out: the man who cut the four of spades. It's a cinch, old man. Let's go and have a spot."

The two men strolled along the street and turned into the County Hotel.

"A cinch, my boy: a dead snip. Dicker—what's that line I read somewhere? Thanks, miss; a little more soda in mine. By some poet—Kipling—no, not Kipling—I'll get it in a moment. Wait: have got——

"'Scornful men who have diced with death under the naked skies.'"

A man with a big black beard who was standing close by turned round and stared at him.

"I'll put that in next week in the column," went on Titmarsh. "And then everybody will associate the two. The man who drew the four of spades: the man who diced with death. It's worth a thousand votes." He broke off suddenly and stared through the door. "Hullo! Hullo! Hullo! Behold the small luncheon party! Isn't that Miss Stratton he's with?"

Mr. Dicker nodded.

"She's helping him. And I think, my boy," he added knowingly, "I think—— But not a word about that. Well, I must be getting on."

The doors swung to behind them, leaving the black-bearded man alone in the bar.

"And who may those two be?" he asked the barmaid.

"The little perky one is Mr. Titmarsh, who is on the *Mercury* staff," she said. "And the other is Mr. Dicker, who is acting as agent for Sir John for the coming election. Sir John Perton, you know; such a nice gentleman. Always a kind word and a pleasant smile for everyone."

The black-bearded man planked some money on the counter and strode towards the door.

"Which is more than some people 'ave," she fired at his retreating back. "A beaver," she continued, darkly, to space as she watched him go out into the street. "And a nasty black one. What's that? Two special Martinis for Sir John? We've only got one sort in here."

She turned to the waiter who had entered the bar.

"Did you see that black beaver? A perfect 'orror. Is Sir John lunching with Miss Stratton?"

"'E is," said the waiter.

"Has she got a ring on yet?"

"Gaw lumme," said the waiter, "there's about ten tables in there complaining about the beef. 'Ow would I know? Give me them cocktails." And he hurried away.

"Your special ones, Sir John," he announced as he placed them on the table.

"Thank you, Charles. And we'll have lunch in five minutes."

A faint smile of satisfaction hovered for a moment round his lips. It was good to be Sir John Perton, fourteenth baronet, prospective member of Parliament; it was good to be having lunch with Monica Stratton. And he would not have been having lunch, nor would he have been fourteenth baronet, if—— Confound old Bimbo Charteris bringing up that yarn again. Still, it might help him. Clever chap, Dicker. But Monica must never know it was he who had told it. It would undoubtedly look a bit vulgar. Besides—Bill Meyrick: even now he wasn't quite certain how she still felt about Bill. On that subject she always dried up.

"I say, Monica," he said, as they sat down to lunch, "there's a thing I rather want to talk to you about. Dicker has unearthed that old chestnut when we were on detachment."

"You mean when you and Bill cut——"

He nodded.

"He's got all the details—I think a chance remark of Bimbo's first put him on the track: and a confounded little newspaper man called Titmarsh has been buzzing round me like a fly all the morning. Well, the long and the short of it is that I'm very much afraid that it will all come out in this local rag, the *Mercury*. And I thought I'd tell you at once because"—he hesitated for a moment or two—"because I wouldn't like you to think that I had anything to do with it. At first I flatly refused to allow it, but Dicker pointed out how futile it was. The *Mercury* people are backing me for all they're worth, and it's what I gather they call a stunt. They mean to print it whatever I say. So what I've done is to stipulate that I shall see a proof before it's printed. And I'd like you to see one, too. I'd just hate—dash it all, Monica, you

"After I'm in, Monica—or not, as the case may be—I'm going to ask you a certain question once again."

know what I mean—to make capital out of dear old Bill's death."

The girl smiled a little sadly.

"I know that, John. But Bill, if he knew, wouldn't mind. And if it helps you to get in, he'd just laugh as he always used to."

Sir John heaved an inward sigh of relief; how very wise he'd been to tell her. Then he looked her straight in the face.

"After I'm in, Monica—or not, as the case may be—I'm going to ask you a certain question once again."

She met his glance gravely.

"I won't promise a satisfactory answer," she said.

"Dear, is there any good hoping any longer?" he cried. "It's two years now; we'd at any rate have heard from the old chap by this time."

"I know that," she answered. "And you've been wonderfully patient, John. Only—I don't know. I just don't know. Don't let's talk about it now, anyway. The important thing to be done is to get you in. And if that story does help, Bill will be so pleased."

And it did help. Titmarsh worked it with a skill which earned him the whole-hearted admiration of Mr. Dicker. Of what use to issue an official statement in an interview that it was nothing? Just ordinary duty, a thing which had no bearing on the election, a thing which the Liberal candidate would have done himself?

Of course, Sir John would say that: it was his natural modesty. And the electors could visualize him, clean-cut, good-looking, scornfully dicing with death under the

naked skies. But by no stretch of imagination could they see his opponent, Mr. Timkins, a retired grocer, doing anything of the sort.

"Dicing with death." Titmarsh hugged himself over the flash of genius that had recalled that line. It had made the citizens of Burchester sit up and take notice. "Dicing with death." That's the sort of member to have.

And the county regiment, too; great thing altogether. Fine man, Sir John; fine regiment; fine fellow, Titmarsh.

He looked up as the door opened and the office boy appeared.

"A man to see you, Mr. Titmarsh. Won't give no name."

Titmarsh removed his feet from the desk as a stranger came in. He was a black-bearded man, and the sub-editor felt vaguely conscious of having seen him somewhere before.

"Good morning," said the stranger, quietly. "I was reading the *Mercury* this morning, and I was much interested in your article on Sir John Perton. I think I saw you two or three days ago in the County Hotel."

Titmarsh nodded: he had recalled him now.

"May I ask you one point?" continued the stranger. "You state that on the evening of the Saturday a heliograph was seen from the neighbouring hills—the long-looked-for message, as you so graphically put it, which announced relief. Is that statement correct?"

"Of course it's correct," said Titmarsh, stiffly. "Otherwise it wouldn't be there."

"I see," murmured the black-bearded man. "And since I assume you were not there yourself, may I ask how you discovered that interesting detail?"

"From Sir John himself," said Titmarsh, truculently. "He personally supplied me with one or two trifling points of that sort. Anyway, what the deuce has it got to do with you?"

The black-bearded man smiled.

"What, indeed? Good morning."

He rose from his chair, and there was a strange look in his eyes.

"Sir John himself! Well, well, Mr. Titmarsh, that is at any rate first-hand information, isn't it? Have you any use in your paper for outside contributions? Of course—nothing of mine would be up to the standard of dicing with death and naked skies. Still, I may send something along for your consideration in due course. And I can promise you it will at any rate have the virtue of being topical—and true."

With a slight nod he left the office, leaving Titmarsh staring after him. What the devil was the fellow getting at? Was he out for trouble, or what? He reached out for the telephone: should he ring up Dicker? And yet—what was the use? What could the man do? Heliograph: that was the signalling affair on which the sun flashed. And Sir John had distinctly said that just before the sun went down he'd seen it. The final rays on the foothills: his very words. No use ringing up: he'd just mention it next time he saw Dicker.

And so no telephone bell rang, and Sir John Perton sat down to lunch half an hour later in ignorance of the fact that a black-bearded man who had been interested in heliographs was even then approaching River Park.

IT was a small luncheon—just the house-party consisting of Bimbo Charteris, Lady Stratton, and Monica. And conversation centred round the coming election.

"I wish to Heaven he'd never got hold of the yarn!" said Sir John. "'Scornful men . . .' Think of it, my dear people! The little blighter never told me he was going to put that in."

"Doesn't matter, John," barked Lady Stratton. "Anything to keep that fearful grocer out. He's just one of the new bunch of war-profiteers. Got no use for 'em."

"For Heaven's sake don't start mother off on that topic!" laughed Monica, "or she'll never finish her lunch."

"Lady Stratton's quite right, old man," said Bimbo. "You're the type of fellow we want in Parliament to-day."

"And after all, John," put in Monica, "it was a fine show. I know you like to pretend it was nothing: Bill would do the same if the cards had gone the other way. But the fact remains that you two did dice with death, and though it may sound a bit melodramatic in cold blood at lunch or in a newspaper, it was a fine show. It catches the imagination."

"It does that all right," laughed Sir John. "If only they hadn't called me a scornful man. What is it, Jackson?"

He turned to the butler, who was standing beside him with a note on a salver.

"A gentleman has just brought this, Sir John. He would like to see you, but he wished you to have this note first."

"Will you excuse me?" Sir John took the envelope and slit it open. "Truly the worries of a prospective candidate never cease!"

"Until you're in," said Lady Stratton. "Then you can sleep for years."

She paused suddenly and stared at her host. "What on earth is the matter with you, John? You look as if you were going to faint."

And assuredly Sir John Perton's face was ghastly. Every vestige of colour had left it, and he swallowed once or twice as if he were choking. The opened envelope had fluttered to the floor at his feet, and in his shaking hand he held the enclosure. It was an ordinary playing-card, and Bimbo Charteris, who had involuntarily risen to his feet, glanced at it.

It was the King of Hearts.

"What is it, John?" cried Monica, anxiously.

"Nothing," stammered her host. "Nothing. Only I must see this man. Will you excuse me, please?"

He pushed back his chair and rose a little unsteadily.

"Outside the front door, you say?"

AND then he staggered back and leaned against the table. A black-bearded man was standing in the doorway. For perhaps the space of five seconds there was silence, and then the girl gave a little cry.

"Why, it's Bill!"

"Great Scott!" said Bimbo, dazedly, "so it is!"

And once again silence settled on the room. For the man at the door said nothing: he merely stared at Sir John Perton.

"You don't seem very glad to see me, John," he said at length.

"It's a bit unexpected," stammered the other. "I thought you were dead."

"We all did, Bill dear," said the girl, going up to him and laying her hand on his arm.

For a moment his eyes softened as he looked at her: then with a little movement he freed himself from her hand.

"For Heaven's sake don't stand about by the door in the middle of lunch!" cried Lady Stratton. "Come and sit down, all of you. John, tell that man of yours to give me some more food, and then send him out of the room."

With shrewd old eyes that missed nothing, Lady Stratton watched her hoped-for son-in-law struggling to regain his self-control. His agitation had not been a pretty thing to see; in fact, it had been out of all proportion to what might have been expected owing to the complications that would now inevitably arise over Monica.

"What's happened?" she said in a hoarse whisper to Bimbo Charteris.

"I wish to God I knew, Lady Stratton!" he answered, and his eyes were troubled.

"So you thought I was dead?" said Bill Meyrick, taking the chair that Jackson had placed for him before leaving the room. "Well, as you see, I'm not. They didn't kill me: they only tortured me."

"Bill—my dear!" The girl gave a little cry.

"They tortured me day in day out for eighteen long months. Would you have liked to be tortured for eighteen months, John?"

Sir John Perton stared at him with haggard eyes and did not speak.

"Answer me, damn you!" snarled Meyrick.

"Steady on, Bill!" said Charteris, quietly. "Remember there are ladies here."

"I apologize," answered the other. "But two years of hell is apt to make one forget social amenities."

"Confound your social amenities, Bill," cried Charteris. "What's on your chest? What's all this mysterious business mean? What the dickens is this King of Hearts doing?"

He bent over and picked up the card.

"You want to know the reason of the King of Hearts? Why not ask John? You saw the effect it had on him."

But Sir John Perton sat motionless with his face buried in his hands.

"There is one thing which two years' hell does for a man, Charteris. It may not be good or pretty, but it breeds a desire for revenge on the person responsible."

The girl caught her breath sharply.

"You speak strange words, Bill Meyrick," said Lady Stratton, gravely. "Don't beat about the bush any more. We know what happened. You cut for it—you two—and you lost. What more is there to be said?"

"You drew the ten of diamonds, Bill," said Charteris. "And John drew the four of spades."

"Did you draw the four of spades, John?" said Meyrick, quietly.

And suddenly they understood.

"Oh, my God!" said the girl, and Charteris's face was grey.

"We borrowed Private Atkinson's pack of cards, you may remember, John," went on Meyrick. "And I cut first. It was ace high—high goes. I drew the ten of diamonds. We joked about it: that put the chances definitely in your favour. And even as we joked your hands were trembling and your mouth was dry. You'd discussed your feelings pretty freely with me that afternoon—your rage and annoyance at being scuppered on a little side-show of that description. You had a title to come and much money. It all seemed so utterly not worth while. Why the devil hadn't you chucked immediately after the big war? But on this miserable little show—who cared? Who at home even knew about it? I remember you harped on that point: it was always a failing of yours, John—your love of the limelight. You'd harped on it so much that your nerves were like fiddle-strings that day—and I knew they were like fiddle-strings.

So I offered to go without cutting; but you wouldn't have that. Certainly not: appearances must be kept up. And then I cut the ten of diamonds. I saw that wild hope in your face, John, as you saw my card. Surely you wouldn't draw higher than that. For you were afraid, John: sick with fear at the thought of going. So was I."

For a while he paused, but the man at the head of the table gave no sign.

"And then someone in my platoon shouted. It was Adams—he'd been hit; but I thought it might be an attack. So I went to the edge of that little sandy plateau to see. And my back was to you, John, when you drew. What card did you draw, you

cur? Tell them what card you drew. You won't: what matter? They know. You drew the King of Hearts, and you were trying to put it back as I turned round. With your fumbling hand you'd got out the four of spades, and for a moment you tried to bluff it off. But I got you by the wrist, John, and when I taxed you with it you broke down. Sobbed like a child. I didn't blame you for that: anybody might have cracked. But to cheat a man who was your friend was not a good thing to do."

Once again he broke off and for a long while no one spoke. And then Bimbo Charteris rose.

"Have you anything to say, Perton?"

"I haven't quite finished, Charteris," said Meyrick. "There is worse to come. What was my last word to you, John? I will refresh your memory. I said: 'There's five minutes more of sunshine, John, and then the darkness will hide your shame.' And during that five minutes something happened, didn't it?"

The two women looked at him uncomprehendingly, but on Bimbo Charteris's face had come a look of scorn immeasurable. He understood.

"Oh, you cur!" he muttered. "You miserable cur! You always said he'd been gone for twenty minutes or half an hour."

"But I don't follow, Bill," cried Monica. "What happened?"

"During that five minutes, Monica, John saw the helio on the hills to the east. And he never called me back. The direction I'd taken prevented me seeing it—and he never called me back, though he could easily have done so. I didn't find that out till I read the interesting article in the *Mercury*, John. I have thought of you these two years merely as a cheat, and not as a would-be murderer also."

On Charteris's face had come a look of scorn immeasurable. He understood. "Oh, you cur!" he muttered. "You miserable cur!"

And then at long last Sir John Perton rose. His face was white and his hands trembled, though his voice was steady.

"I'm in your hands, Meyrick. I admit it all. I cheated you, and then I let you go to your death to keep it dark. My only excuse is that I wasn't responsible for my actions, and that is not a man's excuse. What are you going to do?"

Bill Meyrick stared at him thoughtfully.

"'Scornful men who had diced with death,'" he quoted. "Shall I tell 'em the dice were loaded, John? A nice article in the *Mercury*?"

Bimbo Charteris swung round.

"The regiment, Bill. You're still one of us."

"But he's not," snapped Meyrick.

"He was when it happened."

And then Bill Meyrick felt the girl's hand on his arm.

"Bill dear, there's another thing; you still are—engaged to me. Unless you want to break it off."

"Break it off!" he cried. "Why, the worst torture I've had has been the thought that when I did escape I'd find you married."

The hardness had gone out of his eyes as he looked at her.

"I'll do what you say, Monica."

"No, dear. You'll do what you always in the bottom of your heart meant to do—the big thing. Why did you go, Bill, after you'd found he'd cheated?"

"Because he wasn't fit to go himself."

"Because you're a bigger man than he is. I've always known it. Why not let it rest at that? He's punished enough already."

She pushed back her chair and rose.

"Let's go, Bill. We've two years to make up."

Which is the true story of why Sir John Perton, fourteenth baronet, decided at the last moment not to contest the constituency of Burchester, and went abroad for an indefinite period after letting River Park to his rival, Mr. Timkins.

THE SQUARE DIAMOND

by

W. L. GEORGE

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

JUST as Professor Jones was rubbing off from his hands the chalk with which he had been demonstrating on the blackboard, he found himself sad. He watched the students of Vespucci University crowd out of the lecture hall, babbling and making a noise with their feet, as befitted their years. He told himself that he was an old bachelor, an old professor of mathematics, and that for many weeks nothing had happened to entertain him since the affair of the Noughts and Crosses, and Mr. Coulter's business secret. He reflected that he must return to his apartment and enliven his evening as well as he could by reading the idiotic examination papers of young men and women who didn't know the difference between a function and an integer.

At that moment the janitor of the college forced his way through the crowd, and, followed by a good-looking young man, came up to the professor.

"My name's van Wert, Eric van Wert. Perhaps you know my name, professor. Professor, we're in great trouble at home, and my father's sent me to know: can you come? Can you come now? We've heard of the wonderful thing you did for Mr. Coulter. Now we want you to help us, but can you come now, professor? It's dreadful."

Professor Jones methodically removed from his coat a few fragments of chalk, deducing from the young man as follows: the skin of his hands showed him to be about twenty-two; he had been at a university, judging from the hatter's address in the crown of his hat; also the lining was clean: therefore the hat had been recently bought: therefore, also, he had probably just come down from his university; his hands were dirty, so the professor presumed that he had lost something and had been searching for it.

"Certainly," replied the professor in peaceful tones. "Since you know that my hobby is applying intellect to matter, tell me what I can do for you."

"I can't," whispered the young man, looking towards the janitor. "Professor, come with me now."

"Very good," replied the professor, picking up the right scent and telling himself that there was a woman in this case. He followed the young man to a large car which swiftly took them to a large house in Sutton Place: the luxury of the establishment was defined by the vast garden which surrounded the house. The professor was not surprised, for van Wert, senior, in no wise resembled Coulter; here was no mere operator, but one of the oldest fortunes in the city, dating back a couple of centuries.

In the car the young man, in broken sentences, tried to tell him a little of the case, but as soon as Professor Jones discovered that his companion had had no actual share in the events, he stopped him: "Don't tell me anything more," he said. "It's enough that I should know that your mother is charged with theft, and that a jeweller is with her and your father. Tell me nothing, since you had nothing to do with it directly. I'll make up my own mind, when I've seen the parties, whether your mother is guilty or not."

"Professor!" cried the young man, his face darkening. He clenched his fists, and it looked for a moment as if the professor

Copyright, 1924, by W. L. George in the U.S.A. and Canada.

would be thrown out of the car. "You don't suggest that my mother——"

"I don't," said the professor. "I don't know. I shall know. And, my good young man, don't look at me so ferociously. I have no reason to think that a member of your rich and distinguished family is a thief, but I have every reason for keeping my mind clear of the natural prejudices from which you suffer. I do not know, but I hope that I shall know."

WHEN the couple reached the first floor, a strange scene exhibited itself to the eyes of Professor Jones. In a small sitting-room, obviously tenanted by the lady of the house, and connecting with that lady's bedroom and bathroom, three persons were grouped, two of them the victims of emotion. In a chair sat a solemn, dark man, his fat hands crossed upon his rotund waistcoat. He looked at the same time respectable and obstinate. He sat in that chair as if he had been sitting in it for a long time, and intended to stay there until the expiration of time. The other man was well known by sight to Professor Jones, for it was van Wert, senior, whose picture often appeared in the newspapers above interviews on finance. When Professor Jones came in, van Wert, his hands deep thrust into his trouser pockets, was pacing up and down the room, swiftly, every line of his head and body revealing rage mixed with fear. He walked up and down, regardless of the third figure, to which the professor at once gave his attention.

This was Mrs. van Wert, one of the social leaders of her day, a pretty woman, hardly over forty, who knew how to wear the clothes that came from Paris, and how to entertain royalties when they visited her city. At that moment there was no suggestion of the social leader in Mrs. van Wert. She lay in an armchair, her pretty, flounced, blue frock cruelly crumpled, her fair hair untidy, and her face a vast blotch of tears and clotted powder. She lay there as if she had been flung into the armchair, as if the last hour had taken out of her all energy.

"Ah! Professor Jones," cried Mr. van Wert. "I'm glad to see you. We want you badly here. That man," he nodded towards the dark figure, "says my wife has stolen a diamond from his store. He says that if I'll pay for it he'll go, but I'm damned if I will, professor. I don't believe she took it, of course. Look here, you've got to settle this."

"One moment," said the professor. "Less excitement, please. You are only confusing me. Before I do anything, you, of course, agree to giving five thousand dollars to the fund of the Old Boys of my university? If I succeed, of course."

"Yes, yes," said van Wert, irritably. "I know all about it. If you clear my wife of this charge I'll put six of your poor students on their feet. Now, what do you want to do?"

The professor turned towards the dark man and said: "May I ask who you are?"

"I'm Mr. Lublin, of the Lublin Corporation. You know us, of course?"

"Yes," said the professor, "of course. Will you tell me your version of what happened?"

"It's not my version," replied the man, aggressively. "It's the facts. This afternoon Mrs. van Wert came in with the Contessa di Rimini, a very good customer of ours. The ladies asked to be shown some diamond pendants. They were shown tc them, but they were not satisfied with them, and asked to be shown some single stones. The Contessa decided that three of these should be set aside to be shown to her husband for approval. When the ladies were about to go, a square diamond weighing twelve carats was missed."

"You are sure that it was there?" said the professor.

"Quite," replied Mr. Lublin, immovably. "The single stones were brought from our safe; the clerk in charge made a list of them before handing them out, and this list was initialled by the person who received the stones."

"You can trust that person, I suppose?"

"Quite," said Mr. Lublin, with a smile, "since it was myself."

The professor looked dubious, but did not care to say what passed through his mind. "Very good," he said. "We will therefore assume that the stones were laid before these ladies."

"Assume?" said the jeweller, angrily. "Do you think that I would conceal one of my own stones?"

"I never think," said the professor. "Sometimes I know. In this case I will set your mind at ease by telling you that I believe that the diamond in question was shown to the ladies. Otherwise this would have been denied. Now, when the diamond was missed, what did you do?"

"Well," said Mr. Lublin. "I could not at first believe that the diamond had been stolen."

"Look here——" began van Wert, angrily.

"One moment, Mr. van Wert," said the professor, "let him go on. You could not believe that the diamond had been stolen. So what did you do?"

"I made a thorough search of the floor on both sides of the show-case."

"Could the diamond have fallen into a crack?"

"Impossible, for the show-case is made entirely of glass. The ladies did not leave, of course; in fact, I am sorry to say that the Contessa was naturally insulted, and that she at once demanded to be searched. It was most unpleasant, sir."

"No doubt," said Professor Jones. "Did you search her?"

"We did not want to!" cried the jeweller, apologetically. "But the lady was naturally furious and absolutely insisted upon being searched. So she went with two of our lady assistants, who reported that the Contessa was certainly not in possession of the diamond."

"Meanwhile," asked the professor, "what was Mrs. van Wert doing?"

At that moment Mrs. van Wert raised herself painfully from the armchair and moaned: "I wouldn't be searched. I wouldn't be insulted like that. What should I be searched for? I'm not a thief."

"I see," said the professor, addressing the jeweller, who replied:—

"Of course I attempted to persuade her."

"Why did you attempt to persuade Mrs. van Wert to be searched, considering that you have just told me that you did not want to search the Contessa?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Lublin.

"I'll tell you why," said the professor. "You were being bluffed. You did not want to search the Contessa because she was willing to be searched, but you wanted to search Mrs. van Wert because she seemed unwilling."

"No, I wouldn't be searched," wailed Mrs. van Wert. "I don't see why I should be."

"One moment, Mrs. van Wert," said the professor. "Let me ask Mr. Lublin another question: Why are you here?"

The jeweller laughed. "Well, since Mrs. van Wert wouldn't be searched, you don't suppose I let her go with a diamond lost, worth eight thousand five hundred dollars? No! I said to myself: You don't want to make a scandal; I don't want to prosecute anybody, but that diamond's got to be found or paid for. If Mr. van Wert likes to buy it, of course——"

The professor put out a thin arm and pushed back Mr. van Wert, who stepped towards the jeweller with a menacing air: "Now, Mr. van Wert," he said, "it won't do any good to hit this gentleman. That won't settle anything. He's not saying that your wife's a thief; he's only saying that he wants his property, which is quite natural, and should not make you angry. Have you anything to tell me which might be useful?"

"Yes!" shouted Mr. van Wert, "I've got to tell you that this is perfectly disgraceful, that my family has been in this city nearly three hundred years, that I could have bought my wife hundreds of diamonds like that one if she'd fancied it, and that the man who says she's stolen it is a fool."

"Very helpful indeed," said the professor. "You just stay on your chair, Mr. van Wert, and let me talk to your wife."

HE had some difficulty in obtaining details from the unfortunate lady, who was now weeping abundantly. She confirmed the statements which had been made before. Yes, she had gone to Lublin's with the Contessa, who was a friend of hers. No, she didn't know her very well, but the Contessa and her husband were charming people and went into the best society. The Contessa had been told by her husband to choose herself a present, and she had gone with her to Lublin's to see the stones. "No, of course not!" she cried in horror, as the professor put another question. "Of course I didn't take it. Why should I take it when my husband would have given it to me if I wanted it? Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I do?" She looked sideways towards her husband. "Eight thousand five hundred dollars isn't much. What does it matter, after all?"

"If you think I'm going to pay that man eight thousand five hundred dollars for nothing, Viva," rumbled Mr. van Wert, "you're wrong. We're going to get to the bottom of this. I don't throw away good money for a wild-cat story like that."

Mrs. van Wert thereupon began to cry again, and grew incapable of giving any more evidence.

"Well," said Professor Jones, "I think I've got all the details correct. Let me see." He thereupon proceeded round the room, narrowly examining each person until they shifted under his hard gaze. He examined various small objects, letting his eyes travel everywhere. At one moment he gave a little smile, and finally settled down in a chair. "Now," he said, "I don't think I shall have to detain you much longer, Mr. Lublin. We approach nearer and nearer the solution. I understand that the geography of your store is as follows: Against the walls stand show-cases, filled with silver. Then comes a passage, five feet broad, where the assistants stand. In front is a low show-case made entirely of glass and opening by a glass door at the rear. You have also told me that the show-case is four feet broad, which makes it impossible for anybody to open the door by slipping an arm over. You know the weight of the

"You could not believe that the diamond had been stolen," said the professor.
"So what did you do?"

stone, and are prepared to identify it by your measurements as well as by the weight. Is that correct ? "

" Quite," said Lublin, sulkily, " but I don't see how much farther it takes us."

" You are going to see in about thirty seconds," replied the professor. " But, before that, tell me, are you entirely satisfied with the character of the Contessa ? "

" Oh, she's such a nice woman ! " cried Mrs. van Wert.

" Very likely," said the professor. " Tell me, Mr. Lublin, what do you know about this lady, since Mrs. van Wert knows so little about her ? "

" She is a rather new customer," said Lublin. " But then I understand that she lived abroad until recently, eight or nine months ago."

" When did you first have dealings with her ? "

" About six months ago. I remember that she bought a few pearls."

" Is that all she has bought ? " asked the professor.

" No. She comes in from time to time. I sold her a brooch myself a little while ago. She's not a large customer, professor, but she's a very honest one. She always pays cash. I wish I had more customers like that."

" Thank you," said the professor. " By the way "—he bent down and quickly rose to his feet from the neighbourhood of Mrs. van Wert's chair, holding a small object in his hand—" is this the diamond you're looking for ? "

II.

FOR a moment, paradoxical as it may sound, the room was filled with silence. Heavy stupefaction maintained in their attitude the four remaining actors in the drama, all of them with their mouths open. It was young van Wert spoke first, in the tone of cool detachment which had been imparted to him by his university : " Told you so, professor ; mother's no crook."

" Yes, I think that is the diamond," said Lublin, coming closer and looking down into the professor's palm.

" Suffering cats ! " said Mr. van Wert, and then stopped, his powers of expression exhausted.

Meanwhile Mrs. van Wert, craning forward, her hands clenched upon the sides of the armchair, was staring at the stone, her face distorted by an expression which was not wholly relief. There was a sort of horror in her eyes, as if she perceived that this strange recovery had convicted her. Her little plump fingers were pale at the knuckles, and in her eyes hung aversion, fear, a complete drama.

" Well," said Professor Jones, at length. " This seems very satisfactory." He turned the diamond over : " You say this is the stone, Mr. Lublin. You're quite sure ? "

" Oh, yes," said Lublin, putting out a hand, but the professor stopped him.

" One moment. Just leave it with me for a second. Look at it very carefully without touching it. Is that the stone ? "

" Well," laughed the jeweller, " unless you had a copy made this afternoon it's the stone I want."

" Splendid," said Professor Jones. At this moment Mr. van Wert suddenly released feelings which had been accumulating for a moment : " But, say, professor, that's all very well. You say it's satisfactory, but it doesn't look good to me. Here's the stolen stone, here, in my wife's room, at her feet, and you tell me it's satisfactory ! "

" Jim ! " wailed Mrs. van Wert. " I didn't steal it. You do believe it ? "

" How did it get here ? " shouted Mr. van Wert. " Until that's explained, Viva —I don't say I think you took it—but look here, professor, what's this all mean ? "

The professor had taken no notice of this conjugal exchange and had employed the time in examining the stone with intense care. " One moment," he said, " one moment," and seemed absorbed in his examination.

" Mr. Lublin," he said, " you tell me that the stone was in your safe until you took it out. Do you keep the diamonds permanently in your safe ? "

" Yes, practically," said Lublin. " Every morning my manager takes them out himself, gives them a polish, and puts them back. But at other times they always stay in the safe."

" I should like a little water," said the professor.

" Eric," said his father, " get the professor some ice water."

" No," said the professor. " Hot water. Mr. van Wert, have you such a thing as a cigarette about you ? "

Van Wert stared at Professor Jones, wondering if there was a limit to his eccentricity ; finally, with a shrug he offered his case, from which the professor took a cigarette : " I see you have a bathroom attached. I will get the hot water myself."

As if they were assisting at a conjuring trick, they watched the professor retire to the bathroom with the cigarette ; after a while heard the sound of running water, and watched his back to see what happened. This, however, they did not perceive. When the professor came back he handed the diamond to Lublin. " Mr. Lublin," he said, " this seems to dispose of your share of the matter."

" Certainly," said the jeweller. " I'll be

leaving you now, Mr. van Wert. I'm very glad that——"

"Look here," said the millionaire, striding forward and taking the jeweller by the arm, "if you think my wife's a thief——"

"I never said anything of the sort, Mr. van Wert."

"That so? You wouldn't get away with it. I don't say I'd be surprised if you thought that. The diamond was found here after all. Still—you'll keep your mouth shut about this, Mr. Lublin, or I'll make trouble for you. I own most of the stock of your bank; I can buy your building if I like; I shall find out whether you've got a mortgage that could be called. If you say a word about this, you'll find out that van Wert is in earnest."

The jeweller freed himself with dignity: "I'm sorry that you should threaten me, Mr. van Wert. You may be quite sure that I'll say nothing about it, not on account of your threats, but because scandals do no good to stores. I will now wish you good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," said Professor Jones. "And I strongly advise you, Mr. Lublin, not to tell even your wife that you think Mrs. van Wert's a thief, because she isn't."

When the jeweller had gone, van Wert turned to the professor with sudden emotion in his face. The hard man of business disappeared, and there stood before Professor Jones only an elderly man with a trembling face: "Professor—for God's sake—you don't know what it means to me—yes, I know, I know, this isn't a case for the police—we've been married a long time—it would kill me if my little Viva—professor, for God's sake——"

Mrs. van Wert rose from the chair, slid her hand upon her husband's shoulder, and murmured: "It's all right, I didn't do it."

The professor looked benevolently upon the couple, who clung close, careless of his presence. He was moved, so moved that he blew his nose with such violence and suddenness that the two fell apart.

"Now then," he said, impatiently, to conceal his emotion, "don't get so agitated. Haven't you heard me say that Mrs. van Wert didn't do it? What we've got to do is to find and catch the criminal. Yes, yes, Mr. van Wert, don't tell me that the stone was found at your wife's feet. I know that. Let me go on with the case. I'm afraid I must ask you to do something a little unpleasant, Mrs. van Wert, to do the thing which you refused to do at the store, namely, to be searched."

"Searched!" cried Mr. van Wert. "What for? You've just found the diamond. What are you looking for now?"

"Since it was I who found the diamond," replied Professor Jones, "you might surely credit me with a little common sense. Mrs. van Wert, would you kindly go into that bathroom, take off all your clothing, without any exception, even your combs and your jewellery. Leave everything there; put on a tea-gown. We shall not want you any more, and I can promise you that very soon your character will be cleared."

Professor Jones now held his subjects in a grip so close that he was obeyed without a word. He went into the bathroom and performed his absurd search; after a few minutes he came back, declaring himself satisfied, his eyes shining, his spectacles twinkling with excitement. "Mr. van Wert," he announced, solemnly, "you can look upon your wife as cleared. I will now leave you, and in a few days I will demonstrate her innocence."

III.

MR. LUBLIN was not a man to be moved by threats; at least such was his own version of his character. But, all the same, he must have thought it well to keep on good terms with the powerful van Wert, and Professor Jones did not have much trouble in persuading him that it would be for his good to catch the thief.

"The only thing is," said Lublin, sardonically, "how are you going to do it?"

"That is my business," said the professor. "I found the diamond. I shall find the thief. For that reason I shall be obliged if you will engage me as an assistant. I shall learn the business within a few hours. I merely wish to be behind the counter, and when the time comes—you will be surprised."

After a certain amount of argument, during which the jeweller ventured on a number of ironic remarks directed at amateur detectives, the matter was arranged. Professor Jones obtained from Vespucci University a week's leave of absence, a week for safety, though he assured Mr. van Wert that he expected the arrest for that day, or at latest for the next. Thus you will imagine him standing behind the counter and gallantly doing his part, vaunting ornaments and guiding red-haired ladies towards the choice of emeralds, encouraging the extravagance of bridegrooms and boldly assuring the innocent that nine-carat gold was as valuable as eighteen. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, for never before had he sold anything from hand to hand. Indeed, he discovered himself to be an admirable salesman, since his years, his respectable appearance, encouraged buyers. They felt that such a man could be trusted. And yet he did not seem to concentrate upon his work, for all the time, as customers came in and out, as jewels were showered before his eyes,

his gaze was wandering. He was always looking towards the door, as if waiting for somebody, as if he had in a sense an intellectual appointment with someone who would not have kept it, if aware of the professor's plans. The first day passed, and the professor grew anxious. The case was so neatly arranged that he could not believe that there was a flaw in it. But he realized that he was dealing with a very subtle criminal, one who would not readily rush into his net.

THEREFORE, next day, a little after noon, when the professor was engaged in laying strings of Orient pearls before an exceedingly fat lady who would have done better not to advertise her neck, he deserted her with a sudden apology, calling an assistant to take his place. Meanwhile, Lublin, who by his instructions was wandering about the outer shop, rushed forward to greet a lady dressed in the most fashionable manner. Her clothes combined with her beauty to show at once the origin of her social success. "Contessa," murmured Lublin, bowing, "I—I'm so glad."

The Contessa smiled. "You mean, Mr. Lublin, that you're surprised to see me back after what happened the other day. But, then, you see, I'm not revengeful. I quite understand that mistakes can happen."

While they were talking, the professor watched her, telling himself that she was really charming. Rather tall, very slim, with soft, fair hair, braided close across her low brow, soft, sparkling brown eyes, and a mouth which needed no lip-salve.

"Contessa!" cried Lublin. "It is really very good of you to come back. I was so afraid I had offended you."

"I can't do without you, Mr. Lublin," said the Contessa, with a rippling laugh. "One can get diamonds and pearls elsewhere, but it is only here that you know how to set them." She had a strange foreign accent, but it made her phrasing sound only the prettier.

"Certainly, madam," said Lublin, "we pride ourselves upon our modern settings. I hope you are going to favour us with an order to-day?"

"Yes," said the Contessa, walking towards the show-case and sitting down upon the little gilt chair destined for customers. "After what happened, of course my husband was annoyed and said I ought not to come back, but I persuaded him." Her eyes glanced at the jeweller. "I managed to persuade him. So I've come once more to look at the stones you kindly showed me when one was unfortunately lost. I wasn't sure of them, and I'm not sure yet. Would you mind showing them to me again?"

"I have a selection ready, sir," said the professor, coming close to Lublin, who stared in astonishment. But he played his part well, though not understanding: "Oh, these?" He looked down at a little velvet tray which the professor held: "Certainly, show them to the lady." Professor Jones, in a single movement, laid down the tray and let his arm flash across the glass case to seize the Contessa by the wrist. He turned over and opened her hand; between the white-gloved fingers could be seen a shining diamond.

"What!" shouted Lublin, "what's this? I say, has she been stealing any more?" (For his suspicions had suddenly found their true object.)

"No," said the professor, as he gently removed the stone from the limp fingers of the Contessa, still politely holding her wrist.

"Now," said Lublin to the Contessa, roughly, "perhaps you'll explain how it is that you have one of my diamonds in your hand."

The adventuress was inclined to answer, for her eyes flashed, and the charming mouth set into an ugly line. But she doubtless thought it wiser to be silent, and just shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"You can come to me for the explanation," said Professor Jones. "Meanwhile—allow me, madam." Before the Contessa could protest, he took off her glove, which he put into his pocket. "Mr. Lublin, you'd better send for the police."

"Of course," said the jeweller. In a few minutes a policeman entered the store and led the still silent Contessa towards a taxi, where she vanishes, to affect this story no more.

Meanwhile Professor Jones had telephoned Mr. van Wert, who, ready for his call, arrived very soon. With him and the jeweller he retired to the private office, where he solemnly laid upon the table the glove, the stone recovered from the Contessa, and a crumpled piece of paper which had once covered a cigarette. "Gentlemen," said the professor, "this has been one of the most interesting cases that I have ever dealt with. I may tell you, Mr. van Wert—and I hope that you won't think hardly of me for that reason—that for a moment I believed in your wife's guilt. When the stone was discovered at her feet, I believed that she had concealed it and dropped it in her agitation. After all, Mr. van Wert, there have been cases where rich women have given way to a sudden impulse, and have stolen something which they could quite easily buy."

"Kleptomania," said Mr. van Wert. "Yes, I've heard of it. The poor never suffer from it."

Professor Jones let his arm flash across the glass case to seize her by the wrist.

"As you say, Mr. van Wert; kleptomaniacs are always well-to-do. It was quite possible that Mrs. van Wert, in a moment of desire, had taken the diamond and hidden it. Then she might have grown frightened, and failed in moral courage in giving it back. She might have hidden it, and naturally would refuse to be searched. The case was so heavy against her that, when I picked up the diamond, I said to myself

that since it was found it had better be given back to the jeweller, and nothing more said about it. However, as I tried to put it into my left hand to examine it, I found that it stuck to my forefinger. This was very surprising. It became all the more surprising when Mr. Lublin assured me that the stones were polished every morning. If they were polished every morning, how could the diamond be sticky ? "

" Oh, I see," cried Mr. van Wert. " That's why you wanted the hot water ? "

" Wrong, Mr. van Wert. I didn't want any hot water at all. I only wanted to get out of the room for a moment, and turned on the tap to deceive you."

" And was it just to deceive me that you asked for a cigarette ? "

" Wrong again," said the professor, enjoying his joke. " That was the genuine part of it. I used the paper of the cigarette to rub the diamond clean. I then returned the stone to Mr. Lublin, and kept the cigarette paper. I caused it to be chemically examined that evening, and discovered that the sticky material, removed from the stone, was cobbler's wax. Meanwhile, however, before I knew that it was cobbler's wax, I grew interested in this sticky material, and said to myself that Mrs. van Wert would have about her nothing sticky. I reflected also that none may touch pitch without being defiled. Mr. van Wert, you don't remember the attitude of your wife in the armchair ? "

" No, of course not."

" Well, when I first entered the room she was lying in the armchair, like this." The professor imitated the attitude, his hands outspread. " Neither upon the thumbs nor the fingers did I see any mark. Yet "— and he took up the glove—" the forefinger and the thumb of this glove are black and sticky. See how they cling together. Since the diamond was sticky, and Mrs. van Wert's fingers were clean, it was presumable that she had handled nothing sticky. That was why, rather at random, I decided to examine her clothing. I was not mistaken ; your wife's gloves were perfectly clean, but upon the right knee of Mrs. van Wert's frock I found a slight smear that was also sticky. Below this smear a flounce. It, therefore, became obvious that the diamond had stuck to Mrs. van Wert's knee, fallen into the flounce, and then, thanks to another movement, fallen to the floor."

" But, look here," cried the jeweller, " it's all very well proving to your satisfaction, professor, that Mrs. van Wert didn't take the stone, but how did it get stuck ? And how did it get into her flounce, I'd like to know ! "

" It's really very simple," replied the professor. " The information you gave me, like most of the information one gets in cases like this, was inaccurate. The show-case on which you placed the diamonds is not made entirely of glass. It is made partly of glass. The upper part of the case, which contains various jewels, is separated from the lower part, which contains silver, by a mahogany shelf. This shelf juts out in front, making a moulding about an inch broad. When I became an assistant in your store, Mr. Lublin, the first thing I did was to examine the show-case. I was not mistaken in my line of thought, for, under the moulding, I found a piece of cobbler's wax. You can believe me ; it is still there. The rest was simple ; upon this piece of cobbler's wax I stuck an imitation stone worth nothing, and waited. As I expected, the Contessa, with a conscience beautifully cleared by your search, returned to your store and forgave your suspicions, sat down upon the same chair, in front of the same show-case, to collect the diamond from the place where she had stuck it, the only place where no one would look, proposing then to leave, with the diamond in her bag, perfectly sure that this time she would not be searched, since nothing would be missed."

" I see," said Mr. van Wert, doubtfully. " But that doesn't quite explain——"

" —How the diamond got into Mrs. van Wert's flounce ? Simple enough. Immediately after the Contessa had stuck the diamond under the ledge, it was missed. Mrs. van Wert was sitting with the Contessa. In her agitation she jumped up, striking the ledge with her knee. The diamond dropped off, stuck to her knee, fell into her flounce, and there you are "

Mr. van Wert gulped. " Professor," he said, " I've been married half my life, and I doubted her. I'm ashamed." Then the true masculine solution came to him. " Mr. Lublin," he said, " let me have that diamond, please. Here's a cheque. It's the least I can do for my wife."

THE PEMBERTON BOY

by

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

I.

JACK PEMBERTON had been in London a fortnight and was already sick and tired of the dreary place. He had come home from distant California after an absence of close on twenty years. He had made money in California, and in London he had hoped to spend it. But he was spending nothing to speak of, and, indeed, this homecoming was fast shaping towards what he, in his downright way, would have described as "a big mistake." The day on which he finally committed himself to this description saw him seated on one of the wooden benches that besprinkle Primrose Hill.

Everybody knows, or should know, Primrose Hill. Poets have mentioned it, and standard authors. It is an open space, a modest eminence, immediately adjacent to the Zoo, the Regent's Park, and the prosperous suburb whose postal designation is South Hampstead. Its green slopes and gravelled paths are a favourite haunt of the children, nursery maids, and governesses of that prolific quarter. Pemberton, whose own nursery maids and governesses had once wheeled or accompanied his brothers, his sisters, and himself to this leafy playground, now sat again on one of its benches and discovered that his homecoming had been "a big mistake."

It was early in the afternoon, and he had arrived out here after a prolonged and mournful tour of the aforementioned South Hampstead. It was his native suburb. Old-time friends, associates, and even relatives near and dear had been cold to him, forgetful, unenthusiastic; to-day, urged by some inner want, some human need of comfort, he had gone forth as one goes forth to graveyards or the scene of former lives long vanished. He had revisited the past.

Leaning over the gate and alarming an elderly lady in a cap, who had fetched a stout gentleman with a bald head, he had lingered outside his father's red-brick villa, long since sold to strangers—here they were, apparently!—who had abolished his mother's heavy curtains, re-papered the dining-room, and stuck a doctor's plate upon the door.

In only one place was he remembered; and that was in Ireland's Lane, where all the shops used to be and the shopkeepers' sons, with whom one fought and they fought back—there had been no end to the fighting. In Haverstock Hill was the same tobacconist's, where years ago he had bought forbidden cigarettes, smoking them secretly or brazenly, according to the occasion. "I seem to know your face," said the tobacconist, as Pemberton, leisurely and interested, made his purchase and looked about him; and, "Yes, we used to live in Fellows Road," answered Pemberton. The tobacconist had grown stout and sleek and puffy. In the olden time he had been a very handsome man. Pemberton, as a boy, had looked up to the tobacconist; one of his deepest and most cherished aspirations had been to possess such features, such a figure, and just such a moustache. To-day, however, he had no wish to exchange exteriors with the tobacconist. Seated on one of the wooden benches that besprinkle Primrose Hill, smoking the tobacconist's very best cigar, Pemberton was reviewing these and sundry other matters connected with his "big mistake."

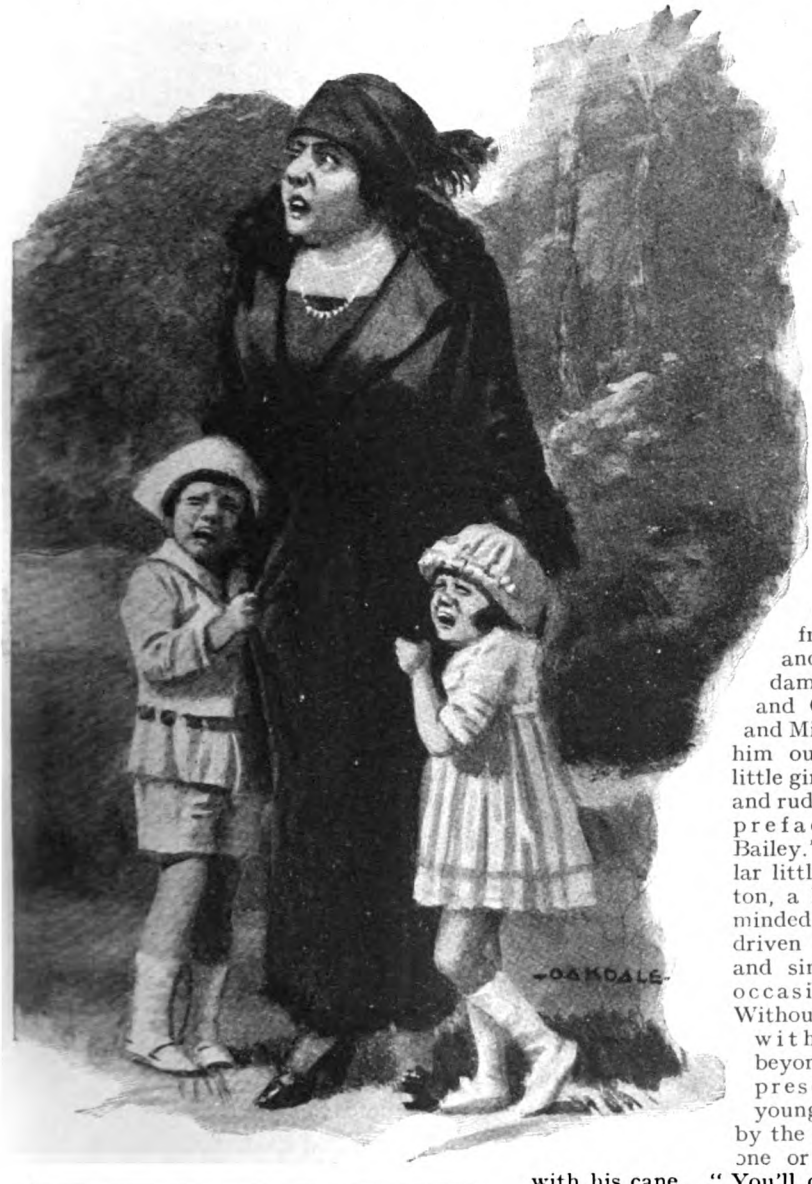
He was lamenting his deplorably friendless condition, his gradual disillusion and dismay, lamenting, too, the misprized intimates he had parted from in distant California, when a governess approached with two small children and established herself in the other corner of the wooden bench. It was a large bench, with room enough and to spare for everybody. Pemberton hardly did more than observe the arrival of the new-comers

His personal troubles possessed him, obscuring his customary interest in an outside and hitherto alluring world. And, moreover, the governess would not at a first glance have been described as a pretty governess, nor even at a second.

He had come back, he was reflecting, and nobody seemed to care. Friends, relatives had changed, had married, had moved away —marriage seemed to alter them more than anything. All the old ties were dead. His sisters, his brothers, married to tepid husbands or still more tepid wives, had received him with nothing warmer than a mild curiosity. Back in California people knew about him, took an interest in him, hearty, genuine—he was one of themselves. He had pictured himself made welcome in England, a snug place ready for him. He had pictured himself as the master of a fine house and dispensing a choice and generous hospitality. Of course, it was easy enough to buy or hire people. How long this doleful reverie would have lasted is uncertain. It was interrupted by the growing rowdiness of the two children who had arrived in the care of the governess, and who

ever since—the governess still sat in her corner—had occupied the vacant portion of the wooden bench.

They were truly horrid children. Pemberton sat up now and observed them. The boy was disobedient and answered back; the girl was a red-haired little imp who nagged and persecuted. The governess, a young yet harried-looking person inclined to leanness ("And no wonder!" thought Pemberton), was evidently trying to snatch a moment's leisure and repose. These two ill-mannered brats were plaguing the life out of her. A frown settled on Jack Pemberton's sunburnt face. A bachelor, and therefore something of a sentimentalist, he had had no idea that children could behave so badly. The young woman's name was Miss Bailey, and these two little wretches shrieked it aloud.



"You tare to hit my chiltren, sir!" she cried; "vot have dey tone to you, de tarlings?"

It was Miss Bailey this and Miss Bailey that from the children, and "Give Stella her book, Georgie," and "Stop pinching Georgie, Stella," from the governess, and "Come off the damp grass, Georgie," and Georgie declining, and Miss Bailey fetching him out of it, and the little girl making personal and rude remarks, always prefaced by "Miss Bailey." She was a regular little fiend. Pemberton, a large and simple-minded man, was at last driven to act as large and simple-minded men occasionally do act. Without hesitation and without considering beyond the immediate present, he seized young Master Georgie by the ear and gave him one or two smart raps with his cane. "You'll do as Miss Bailey tells you," he said, briefly. A less severe though equally spontaneous castigation was next administered to Miss Stella; and these operations ended, Jack Pemberton looked up and found himself confronted by a stout and irate woman who spoke with a foreign accent.

"You tare to hit my chiltren, sir!" she cried; "vot have dey tone to you, de tarlings?"

"The darlings," snorted Pemberton; "little beasts!"

"He said it was because of Miss Bailey," whined the little girl.

"Yes, he said it was Miss Bailey," blubbered Georgie.

The woman turned from Pemberton to the quaking governess.

"You bermit dis, Miss Pailey," she said; "you encourage him?"

"Miss Bailey couldn't help herself," from Pemberton.

Suddenly, from quiescence and a penetrating loneliness, he had moved into the midmost centre of a tornado.

The two children howled louder than ever; their mother stormed at Miss Bailey; while Pemberton explained his guilt and took the entire responsibility.

"I tismiss you," shrieked the woman, with a dramatic gesture in the direction of poor Miss Bailey; "my husband vill send you your vages, and never you tare to come near my chiltren again. And as to you, sir"—she had turned to Pemberton—"I vill tell de bark-keeber; I vill tell bleesemen; you will pe had ub for dis. You tink you can hit my chiltren!"

Miss Bailey sank, a terrified heap, in one corner of the wooden bench; Pemberton, defiant and unconvinced, said he cared neither for the park-keeper nor all the policemen on Primrose Hill, and added something about "this poor girl." The woman gathered her offspring to her side and began to drag them home, still blubbering, and turning back as though anxious to see the last of a personage so formidable, so unexpected and eventful. Pemberton was left alone on the bench with poor Miss Bailey.

"I—I couldn't help it," he said at last, feeling that some sort of apology was necessary; "they were such little beasts."

A wan smile answered him. Miss Bailey, at the moment, could do no more.

"You'll be glad to be rid of them." He was, and he knew he was, making the best of a poor case.

"I don't know," she said.

And then he guessed the root of her concern.

"You'll have to get another job?" he asked.

Miss Bailey nodded

"Is it difficult?"

"Very difficult."

Obviously it must be if she could feel the loss of such a job as this. He looked at her; he thought hard for a space. He must make it up to her in some way; it was all his fault. He couldn't offer her money; he knew nobody who might employ her.

"I've got a little boy," he now announced. "I've been looking for somebody to take him out and give him lessons; in fact, I'd advertised in this morning's *Telegraph*."

It was an amazing and impromptu lie; but how else could he make good the harm that he had done, how else pay over damages and compensation? And he went even deeper, enjoying and arresting the look of relief that had come over her, that was fast expelling the extreme dejection of Miss Bailey, unemployed and without a "character."

"He's a wonderful good-hearted little chap," he had pursued; "he'll do anything for you if you're friendly with him. Of course, he *is* a boy; but not that kind of boy——"

"Do you—do you think your wife would approve?" began Miss Bailey.

"Oh, I'm a widower," he answered, briskly. He could manage the boy, but to invent a wife as well—he felt that that was a trifle beyond him. And then, "This is my card," he added. "I'm staying at the Grafton Hotel. Your engagement begins to-day, Miss Bailey. You'll take the child out every morning and see to him in the afternoon. A great weight off my mind, I assure you. A strange and rather a remarkable coincidence. And—er—I suppose it's business and that I had better ask your terms?"

She mentioned an incredibly low figure, and, as though fearing that even this might be refused, "I'll have to pay bus fares out of it," she had begun; but Pemberton interrupted her.

"We'll double that," he said; "and I think you had better take taxis and let me pay for 'em—saves time."

Before they separated he had noted her address, and had promised to write, giving further and exact particulars, that very evening.

II.

MISS BAILEY—poor soul!—occupied a poky little room on the third floor of a house in King Henry's Road. It should have been a dressing-room, for a door connected it with the big bedroom that looked out over the back garden and was occupied by the old gentleman who snored. This door was religiously locked, nay, almost sealed. The Misses McCurdy, who let the apartments and whose house it was, saw to that. They tolerated Miss Bailey, giving her this corner and allowing her to cook things over an apparatus which they declared was sure "some day" to set the place on fire. So far, however, that day had not arrived, and as Miss

Bailey paid regularly and made her own little bed and gave no trouble except when she caught cold and had to stay in it, the Misses McCurdy let her have the room on the distinct understanding that she must clear out of it in case it should be "wanted"; that is to say, whenever a married couple, who naturally would require a dressing-room, came in and replaced the old gentleman who snored and who had a double-bed and two pillows all to himself. Yet even that couldn't keep him quiet.

Really, and in their heart of hearts, the Misses McCurdy never expected to let the rooms to a married couple, such couples (the lady especially) being no end of a nuisance and always ringing the bell.

Miss Bailey was busy over the apparatus, making, indeed, what she called her breakfast, when the letter that she had been listening for arrived. The servant girl, who went round with the morning's letters and pushed them under doors, was breathing hard outside. Miss Bailey cried, "All right, Polly," and in another moment she had flung herself on the bed and was reading a downright and highly masculine hand that started with "Dear Miss Bailey," and ended with, "Yours cordially, J. Pemberton." There was also an enclosure, and this enclosure felt like money found.

"Dear Miss Bailey," *he* said—for he had already become *he* in that young person's private mind—"When I reached the hotel last evening I found that little Jimmie was far from well. The doctor who was called in says it is measles. Nothing very serious, but we have thought best, and the hotel people wanted it, because measles is catching, to send the youngster away to a home at the seaside, where he will be well looked after, far better than in a big hotel with its noise and so forth.

"Now, my dear Miss Bailey, this is not going to affect our arrangement. It is not *your* fault that the dear fellow was taken ill, and so, as you know nothing at all about me, I enclose a cheque for your first month's salary, which will always be paid in advance, that being my business habit and one which I believe in thoroughly, having as a young man often run into debt for no other reason than that I had to wait for my salary.

"Now, while my young man recovers," the letter continued, "I have a proposition to put forward. It will fill in your time, and it will assist me greatly in a scheme I have in hand. Of course, you can decline it, for you have not been engaged to go house-hunting and buying furniture, but to give lessons and so forth to my little boy. Briefly, it is this: I am a retired business man, and I have just come back from California, where I have spent the last twenty years. I want to spend the rest of my life in my own country, and I am thinking of buying a comfortable house and furnishing it, somewhere in South Hampstead, where I was born and raised. Now, I know very little about house-hunting and furnishing. It is really a woman's business. I cannot very well ask my sisters and other friends to give up the time required; but perhaps you wouldn't mind, and we could go on with this while Jimmie is getting on with his measles. It is, of course, just as you like, but I would be very grateful for a woman's help in this matter, and I would like to begin at once." In conclusion, J. Pemberton awaited her reply and was, as already stated, hers cordially.

Miss Bailey next unfolded the cheque and looked at it. She had never owned a cheque before, always being paid in hard cash, and not much of that either. What with the money Mrs. Seligmann had sent round and this cheque, she felt quite rich; and feeling rich was but a step from planning new garments, including underwear. Not that anybody would see it—Miss Bailey blushed a light pink at the mere thought; but there can be no reasonable doubt that it was the new garments (including underwear) which definitely committed her to the house-hunting and furnishing. She wrote her letter and posted it that morning, and Pemberton wired back that he would call for her at eleven o'clock next day.

III.

TO return to Pemberton. He was, as we know, an idle man with nothing in the world to do, and when he left Miss Bailey on Primrose Hill he really had some intention of finding a boy and letting Miss Bailey look after the little chap. But as he walked through Regent's Park and became practical once more, he didn't quite see why he should saddle himself with an adopted son; for it was perfectly clear that if he actually got hold of such a boy as the one he had sketched to her, he would have to stick to the little beggar and make him his own for good. His plan of life included no such impromptu adoptions. He had lied himself in, he now reflected, and he would have to lie himself out again. Yet, for all that, the adventure amused him and keyed him up. For the first time since his arrival in England he felt that there were things for him to do, that life might possibly be agreeable and full of interests and occupations.

It was after dinner that he had decided on the house and the furniture. Of course, far back in distant California he had dreamt of such a house, but the cold realities

of his reception here had made the dream recede, and it had almost reached vanishing point when he sat himself down on the wooden bench and thought of his father's villa, the tobacconist, and the "big mistake." This evening it resurged in all its splendour; so much so that, when he threw away his second cigar and wrote off to Miss Bailey, the lies and business of his letter were the least part of that thoughtful document. They came quite easy, especially the lies. He enjoyed these terribly; that boy of his was really "a most awful lark." He grew serious, however, when he came to the house and furniture. Yes, he'd buy them, get them; he'd chance it; life in the old country mightn't be so bad. But perhaps she'd be afraid of him. He knew that women, and especially unmarried women, had a code of what they might do and what they mightn't. He had never been able to make head or tail of it himself. They had rules, he knew, and the exceptions were so numerous that the rules might be the exceptions, and *vice versa*. He'd chance that as well. House-hunting and choosing furniture were a woman's job, and a man was likely to make a fool of himself if he started out on it alone, and he couldn't very well ask his sisters or any of the people who had been cold to him; so here was a real use for poor Miss Bailey, and one he hoped she would accept. He went to bed, seeing large and prominent houses that made people gape and ask who lived in them. The answer was "Jack Pemberton," accompanied by references to California and the Borton Oilfields. And he saw, too, chairs and carpets and hangings, and himself sprawling in front of the fireplace or mixing drinks at a side-table. Jack Pemberton's it was again, and he was—well, you know who he was.

IV.

PUNCTUALLY at eleven in the morning Pemberton drove up in a taxi-cab and left it waiting while he rang the bell. The Misses McCurdy observed him through the kitchen window, Miss Alice, who was stout and dignified, maintaining that he had called about "rooms" and that she really wasn't fit to go upstairs; while Miss Esther, who was lean and bilious, said, "We haven't any rooms," and supposed that he had come to visit Mr. Eastwell, Mr. Eastwell being the old party who snored. When Polly, the little "general" with the truly awful appetite—"She'd eat the joint if you left her alone with it," so said the two Misses McCurdy, who took good care that no such *tête-à-tête* occurred—when Polly, the little "general," came down and said that the gentleman had asked for Miss Bailey and had announced his intention to wait "here," meaning the hall, both ladies frowned. "The idea!" exclaimed Miss Alice. "And a taxi-cab, too!" added Miss Esther. But all this was as nothing to what they said when Miss Bailey's new hat appeared on the horizon, and a pair of new shoes in mouse-coloured leather, with silk stockings to match.

You could see the stockings and a very neat ankle as Miss Bailey was handed into the taxi-cab. The ankle, however, was wasted on the two Misses McCurdy. "So that's what's become of the cheque she asked us to change for her!" said Miss Alice; and "Nice goings on!" added Miss Esther, whose biliousness often made her say things in the morning that she was sorry for in the afternoon, and never would have said at all if she had only known. "Perhaps they're engaged," now suggested Miss Alice; and this novel aspect occupied both ladies till the butcher called and was told to take back a pound and a half of suet which he had tried to pass off as an integral and inevitable portion of a round of beef.

The ankle, though wasted on the two Misses McCurdy, was not entirely thrown away upon Jack Pemberton. He noted its existence with approval, and, altogether, he found Miss Bailey looking "very well." He told her so as they drove on to a house agent's and repeated that he was glad to see she hadn't taken her recent trials too seriously. Miss Bailey, sitting in a taxi-cab and crowned with a new hat, had, somehow, become a very different young person from Miss Bailey doing governess and properly sacked by Mrs. Seligmann. There was a something about her that was just as new as the new hat and quite as striking as the freshly-purchased shoes and stockings. "She's enjoying herself," meditated Jack Pemberton; and, indeed, such was the case.

They looked over several houses, Miss Bailey looking harder than anybody, and then they both agreed that it was time for lunch. The taxi-cab now took them westward and Miss Bailey made a first acquaintance with the fanciful meals of that locality. Judged by this instance, they were rather good. She ate things she had never eaten in her life before, and very probably might never eat again; and so she ate with thoroughness, in case. She distrusted strange liquids, and therefore took her stand by water neat. They conversed about the house and the little boy. Miss Bailey felt rather mean for forgetting him till now—those houses were such a distraction. The little boy was going on nicely, and in another week or two his father hoped the lessons could begin.

The house—they took three weeks and several days to find it—was not actually in Hampstead, but in a village called St. Mary Cray. You reached it from London under the hour, including the drive from the station. They had begun with Hampstead and its two big avenues where house and garden often covered half an acre, and, little by little, Miss Bailey had said her say, which was to the effect that a gentleman of Mr. Pemberton's position and with nothing in the world to do would be more properly housed either right in town or right away from town. Hampstead, it appeared, was all very well if you were tied to a daily grind at an office, but, if you weren't, you wanted either to be near your clubs or else to have some little property whose interests would fill up your time. Miss Bailey's father had been a country parson and taken prizes at all the flower shows round; and Pemberton, who was always open to conviction, felt at last that Miss Bailey, as usual, was right, and he, as usual, was wrong. He couldn't forever be gazing at his father's red-brick villa or exchanging reminiscences with the tobacconist. The house that they decided on stood in thirty acres, had plenty of stabling—Pemberton was fond of horses—flower-beds and conservatories, and he would be able to grow all his own vegetables and most of his fruit. And there would be room for chickens and ducks and geese as well, and a pig in the sty and turkeys for Christmas. Miss Bailey, meanwhile, had become familiar with the wildest luncheons, including those you get at railway stations while waiting for your train. And the boy? He still had the measles; and now the house was found, Miss Bailey grew anxious.

"He's at Hythe, in a nursing home—Doctor Newton's?" she asked suddenly.

"Did I say Newton's? Yes, that's it; at Hythe, in Kent. Good sea air and the best attention. I went down last Sunday. He rather likes it. He's up and about again"; and Pemberton lied glibly, as only he could lie on this particular topic. He was growing used to it now. He almost believed in it.

V.

THIS house-hunting over, Miss Bailey formed a resolution. She asked and obtained a day off for herself. Quite long ago now she had ceased to fear Pemberton and asking came easy. It wasn't like Mrs. Seligmann.

"I want a couple," he said in answer; "I've had enough of chasing round. My, but you're a hustler, Miss Bailey! Let's both take a rest, and then on Monday we can start buying furniture and all the rest of it."

That was agreed, and early next morning Miss Bailey, after debating whether she should wear her new fawn-coloured dress or the pale green which was newer still, decided on the fawn, with shoes and gloves and stockings to match, and a second new hat that framed a face grown almost pretty.

"She's not only smart, but she's filling out," observed Miss Alice McCurdy, watching her go forth that Friday morning.

"She's given Polly the blue serge. Only half-worn, I call it," replied Miss Esther; adding, "Why doesn't she take a better room? There's the second-floor front she could have for the asking, now that Mr. Slater's given notice. It won't last; that's what I say."

"I'm sure she's engaged," put in Miss Alice.

"Spending all her money on her back. It's like these young girls, nowadays," complained Miss Esther.

"But she's filled out wonderfully," returned Miss Alice.

"Well, we'll see what we will see." It was a dark saying and might mean anything, and nobody could contradict it, and Miss Esther felt thoroughly satisfied that whatever happened she'd be right. And meanwhile Miss Bailey was on the road to Charing Cross, and outside the station she bought a pound of the best white grapes at one shop and a pound of the most expensive chocolate creams at another. Then she walked into the booking office and took a third-class ticket to Hythe.

In the train she leant back and thought about Jack Pemberton and the pleasant surprise she would spring on him when they met next Monday morning. She had meant to go earlier; she had meant to show that she appreciated his kindness and generosity; and a little boy, and especially a convalescent little boy, appealed to Miss Bailey's tender heart. Now that she was so very prosperous, she had time to be tender. No more worries, nothing. She was now a happy girl who wanted her happiness to spread.

She pictured little Jimmie with the basket of grapes and the chocolate creams. She pictured the nursing home and Doctor Newton. She pictured herself sailing in on them in all the glory of her new outfit. Perhaps she and the boy might go bathing; he was "up and about again," and it was a warm and sunny day. There would be a blue sky and little waves, and you could hire a dress on the beach; the boy would take her.

He was a fair boy, with laughing blue eyes and curly hair and freckles, and well set up and fine and plucky. Jack Pemberton had told her all about him. And he could

swim and manage a boat and play baseball, and was full of questions about everything on earth. "Boys learn that way," said the proud father, "by asking. You won't get impatient with him, will you?" Miss Bailey had assured him that she understood and was prepared to answer any amount of questions.

Out of the carriage window she saw orchards and hop gardens, and houses something like the new house, but not so good. She liked that new house immensely. And when she had furnished it and filled it—Miss Bailey shuddered. She shuddered with delight at so much beauty; she shuddered with delight at the bare idea.

They hadn't arranged whether she should come in and give lessons, sleeping out in some place in the village, or whether they would find a room for her in the house itself—there were plenty and to spare. She decided now that she was going to live in the house itself. She was sure she could, if she only said so. And next she began to choose which room, and the furniture and the carpet and the bright chintz curtains. It was to be a room that caught the sunshine the first thing of a morning. The sun would come pouring in, the birds would be singing outdoors, and she would jump out of bed in her new pink pyjamas, and there would be a new shiny-white bath, specially laid for her and Jimmie. They would race to see who would have it first, and sometimes she would win and sometimes he. It would be heaven after King Henry's Road and the Misses McCurdy, where she only had a little kettle of hot water which she boiled herself on that wretched paraffin stove. She began to hate King Henry's Road and the Misses McCurdy.

"Frumps," she said, "frumps!" And she found that she had said it out loud, for the old lady opposite looked startled and the young man in the corner grinned. Miss Bailey blushed and looked very embarrassed, and decided to keep quiet till she got to Hythe.

THE station was above the town, and from it you could see the Channel all a-sparkle in the bay. The road was downhill, and Miss Bailey, taking a taxi, asked the driver to go straight to Doctor Newton's nursing home, and placed her pound of grapes and the flat box of chocolate creams upon the seat.

The driver hesitated. He had lived here all his life, but he didn't know Doctor Newton and he didn't know of any nursing home. There was Doctor Blake and Doctor Wickham and Doctor James, but they hadn't got a nursing home. And he knew of no nursing home nearer than Sandgate, four miles on, and that was full of bad cases left over from the war. Still, he'd ask.

They drove downhill together and the taxi-driver asked. He asked three times before Miss Bailey was satisfied. And now they were on the sea-front and she was nearly in tears and beginning to think strange things of Jack Pemberton.

She paid the driver and picked up her two packages, and it being only mid-July and too early for the season, there was nobody about except herself. She found a brick and glass building with seats, put there for people who liked to watch the sea, and within its shelter she settled down and thought some more things about Jack Pemberton.

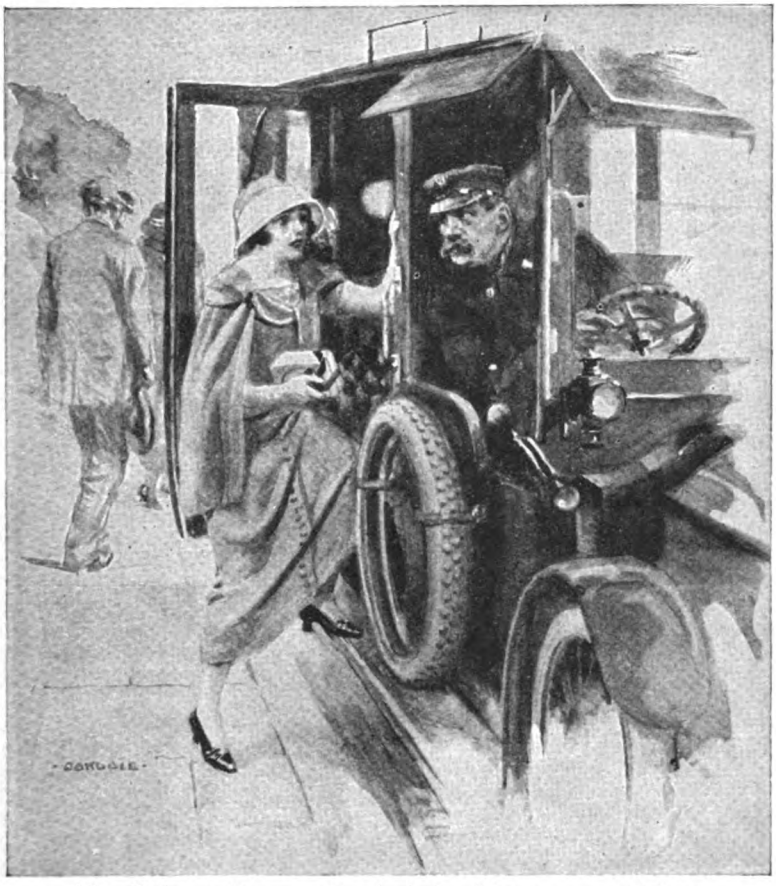
The awful fellow had lied to her. He had lied to her from the very start. There was no little boy and he didn't want a governess. He had done it all because Mrs. Seligmann had sacked her and because it was his fault. Of course it couldn't go on. He had meant well and she liked him for it. But it would have to stop, and she must find herself a real situation. This is where the code that had so puzzled Jack Pemberton came in. The house and the new bedroom with the bright chintz curtains rose before her eyes, and so did that gleaming white bath-room. She wept. She wept openly and bitterly. "If he hadn't begun it," she said, "I'd have had another place by now." She felt like a woman who has been driven out of Paradise, and her one comfort was the brand-new clothes she sat in and the others she had left behind. "He can't take these away," she cried at last; and then, feeling hungry, she began to eat the pound of grapes and the chocolate creams. These comforted her. An hour went by and she had eaten the lot. Poor little Miss Bailey! It was the last of the strange meals she was growing used to. And then she thought of those others she had eaten in state, of lobster and salmon and roast duckling and ice creams and fruit salads and things with funny French names. It was all over. No, she couldn't be angry with him, but, still, it was very hard to bear. She would go home to King Henry's Road, and next morning she would start her hunt for another job.

She had her bathe in the sea, and afterwards she lay on the beach in the hot sunshine and felt better, and later she had tea at a small hotel with a big garden where you could sit in an arbour. And the past month seemed a dream from which she was awakening. It was only when she was back again in the little room in King Henry's Road that she felt quite awake again. Then she took pen and paper

and wrote to Mr. Jack Pemberton at the Grafton Hotel.

"I went down to Hythe to-day," she said. "I'd been meaning to visit your little boy, and now I know everything. It was kind of you to invent him, and I suppose you had to keep it up. But I must look out for a real place, and though I'd like to help you choose the furniture, I feel you've already done more than enough for

"Yours sincerely,
"MARGUERITE BAILEY."



Miss Bailey, taking a taxi, asked the driver to go straight to Doctor Newton's nursing home.

And that was the end of it all, apparently. Miss Bailey hardly slept a wink that night, but when she did she had a vision of Jack Pemberton, dressed as a boy in a light blue suit with knickers and bare legs, and he had bright blue eyes and curly hair, just like little Jimmie.

Next morning she came downstairs and there stood Mrs. Seligmann.

"I peen vaitin' for you," announced that lady, amiably. "I vanted to catch you pefore you vent out."

"Me!" exclaimed Miss Bailey.

"De governess ve get vas no goot an' she make eyes at Mr. Seligmann. You vos always a goot girl excebt dat vunce ven I lose my dember. An' de chiltren is asking for you. 'Ve vant Miss Pailey!' dey says. Ant so I'm come rount myself to know if you von't come pack. De chiltren loves you, Miss Pailey, ant if it hadn't peen for dat gendleman—dey've tolt me all apout him. You'll come pack to us? Ve'll bay you more. Mr. Seligmann's peen doink goot pisiness. Ve vas used to you, Miss Pailey, an' ve all like you, if I tid lose my dember. Put dey're my chiltren, Miss Pailey, an' if you hat chiltren an' fount a strange man peating dem, I'm sure you vould do de same as I tid. Vouldn't you, Miss Pailey?"

"Yes," said Miss Bailey, thoughtfully, "I suppose I would."

Mrs. Seligmann was taking in the new hat, the new dress, the new gloves, the new shoes and stockings.

"Ve'll bay you vot you are getting now ant five shilling more," she said, distractedly.

"All right," said Miss Bailey, firmly and roundly. Really she was saying good-bye once more to honest Jack Pemberton. No, it wouldn't do, she thought, and probably he'd be glad to be quit of her. He'd only done it out of kindness and not because he really wanted her.

"If you're serious, I could begin on Monday, but if you're not——" she said aloud.

"I am serious," cried Mrs. Seligmann,

making a mental resolution that once Miss Bailey was in her power there would be some slight readjustment of wages and that she would see to that.

"All right," said Miss Bailey. "I'm getting double what I had with you. The same hours and on Monday."

This dialogue took place in the front parlour, into which shabby but spotless apartment Miss Bailey had tactfully steered her visitor.

"I don't know what the world's coming to," said Miss Esther, who was listening behind the folding doors. And, "She that used to be so meek and mild," she added, thoughtfully. "I'm sure there's a man in it."

"And a very good thing too," whispered Miss Alice. "It wouldn't do for us all to be old maids, would it?" she asked. "Why, the world would come to an end!" And at this appalling prospect both ladies shuddered.

They came out into the hall again when Mrs. Seligmann was safely disposed of; and Miss Bailey, who had come down ready to seek the agency where governesses and other such dependents go off to find employment, now thought of the letter she had written overnight and went out and posted it.

VI.

EARLY on the Sunday morning a large new motor-car drew up before the house in King Henry's Road. You could tell it was new by the way it shone and glittered. And from the driver's seat in front sprang a large and active gentleman, very sunburnt and broad across the shoulders. He wore a soft felt hat and a grey suit to match, with a fresh crease down the trousers. Up the steps he came and rang the front-door bell so vigorously that you'd have thought it was his own bell.

Miss Esther McCurdy opened the door and frowned at him and very tartly inquired his business.

"Will you please tell Miss Bailey that I'll wait for her here and that she's going out for a day in the country?"

"And who may you be?" asked Miss Esther, still frowning and still very cross with him.

"Say it's her Uncle Jack from America."

He smiled on the bilious woman and watched her go. "Poor Marguerite," he said, "poor Marguerite—to live with that!" And then he lit a long cigar and waited patiently in the Misses McCurdy's hall or stood on the front doorstep and admired his car and saw that no one went away with it.

He heard footsteps at last, and Miss Bailey stood before him.

"I guessed it was you," she said. "Did you get my letter?"

"What letter?" he asked, all innocence. One lie more, the very last. He would never tell her another. And without giving her time to explain, "I chose this on Friday—our day off." He was pointing to the gleaming car. "But before I decide upon it, I want to hear what you say. We'll take a drive through the country and lunch somewhere, and then you can tell me."

"I was going to church," began Miss Bailey.

"We'll do that too," he said; "but not this Sunday." And she was following him down the steps—she hadn't meant to—but there she was.

The Misses McCurdy were watching. They saw her Uncle Jack take the driver's seat and Miss Bailey get in beside him, and how he put a dust-cloth over her knees.

"She won't be here long," said Miss Alice.

"Uncle—he's not her uncle!" returned Miss Esther; and by the time they started to argue the matter the car had passed out of sight and Miss Bailey and Jack Pemberton were on the way to the new house.

He drove in silence and she, too, was silent.

"You have to watch out for things," he said. "And here in England you keep to the left instead of to the right, and I've such a precious load."

This pleased Miss Bailey. She sat quite still and every now and again she looked at him. No, she didn't want to exchange him for Mrs. Seligmann.

Once or twice she tried to tell him about Friday and Hythe and the nursing-home, and even about the pound of grapes and the box of chocolate creams. But he headed her off very skilfully. "A new car takes some driving," he said; and there was always some fresh distraction as soon as she got started.

"We'll come back for lunch here," he said, when they crossed Eyneford Bridge. "I like these hills and this valley."

His own house was not far off. They drove as far as the gate and then she jumped out and he took her arm and they strolled up the drive together. Miss Bailey didn't know why she let him take her arm, but it seemed to her that she liked it.

"Do you know, I missed you this last day or two; I missed you most dreadfully," he began.

Miss Bailey liked that as well.

And next he looked at her, and looked again and saw a change in her face and

Miss Bailey didn't know why she let him take her arm, but it seemed to her that she liked it.

made her stop and drew her closer. Then he kissed her.

Miss Bailey liked that even better.

"Something's hurt you," he was saying, tenderly; "but it's made you—I don't know what to call it—more of a woman?"

"I didn't sleep on Friday night. I wrote you about it," said Miss Bailey. "I went to Hythe and there wasn't a little boy——"

"Won't I do?" asked Jack Pemberton.

Evidently he would. For when they stood before the house his arm was around her.

"We'll begin the furnishing to-morrow," he said.

Miss Bailey trembled.

"Oh, Jack," she whispered; "if I hadn't gone down there and found you out!"

"It's those children that began it. Want to go back?" he asked, smiling.

She put her arms round him at that, and Jack Pemberton learnt what love was; and so did Miss Bailey.

THE MIND OF THE RACE-HORSE

Do Horses Think?

by

EDGAR WALLACE

A symposium of experts, of the greatest interest to all lovers of horses. Incidentally, it shows that a horse is so much a thing of mystery and caprice that it is impossible to foretell what he will feel inclined to do while racing—which is the real reason why the prophets are so often wrong and why backing horses is a "mug's game."

THE thoroughbred racer represents the highest development in the process of the horse's evolution. He stands for something superior to his humble fellows in point of speed and quality, and it is popularly believed that, having achieved this physical superiority, he has acquired also an intelligence which places him in a sphere apart from his species.

Racing is at once the greatest national sport, and, in point of turnover, the second greatest industry in England. It has produced both a press and a literature, and yet, for some unaccountable reason, though thousands of books have been written on the race-horse, no writer, scientific or biographical, has devoted more than a chapter to the psychology of this fascinating animal, and in consequence there has grown up about the race-horse a whole series of legends which are now accepted as proved facts.

Mr. Alfred Day.

And not the least important of these is that the horse is an intelligent animal with the power of reasoning.

That a dog thinks, we know. The proof that he turns events over in his mind has been tested by every dog-lover. A dog dreams. In his sleep he lives over his fights, his joys, and his miseries. We have all at some time or other been compelled to stir some gruffly barking little slumberer to wakefulness, or have listened to his whimperings as he lay dead to the world before the fire. But the sleep of the horse is practically dreamless. Does he think?

MR. ALFRED DAY,

the Arundel trainer, says "No." Mr. Day, an old Sherborne boy, was brought up amongst horses, and is something of a physiologist, for he was trained for a doctor. His father, William Day, was the author of several books on the horse, and was one of the most famous trainers of his time.

"The horse does not think—he is one of the most stupid of the domestic animals, and the more perfectly bred they are, the less evidence is there of intelligence. Possibly the cart-horse is the cleverer of the two varieties. Horses get credit for intelligence because they can associate consequences with causes. If a horse finds a gap in a fence that leads him to more desirable pasture, he goes to that gap the next day, though there may be half-a-dozen other openings. If he has been stopped at an inn for his master to take refreshments, he will always stop at that inn, even though it has been converted into a temperance hotel. A horse will recognize the boy who looks after him because he associates the boy with certain attentions he receives. A dog may show suspicion towards a stranger who tries to feed it, but a horse will take oats from Tom as well as from Jim—only the next time he sees Jim he will expect to be fed."

People talk glibly about "rogues"—that is to say, horses that, having reasoned out the why and wherefore of racing, decide in their minds that they will not do their best. The term "rogue" presupposes that the animals have the gift of thinking, and that their erratic behaviour on a racecourse is the outcome of reason. In effect, that a horse says to himself:—

"I don't like racing—it is a very distressing occupation. One runs until one is exhausted and then there is every chance of getting a good licking in the last furlong. I won't try to run fast—I'll take it comfortably, and although I shall probably get the licking I sha'n't run myself to a standstill."

The rogue and the cunning horse, according to Mr. Day, are more or less of a myth.

"There is usually something constitutionally wrong when a horse will not give you his best," said Mr. Day. "I have only seen two so-called rogues, and there was probably some obscure physical cause for their failure."

My own experience bears this out. Last year I leased a good young horse, that had won a thousand-pound race as a two-year old. I ran him at Lewes, and it seemed to me that he ran like one that could an' he would. For half the journey he was galloping like a lion, and then suddenly seemed to decide that racing was a fool's game. He finished last but one. The jockey told me that he wouldn't have it—several knowledgeable people commiserated with me upon my keeping a rogue in training.

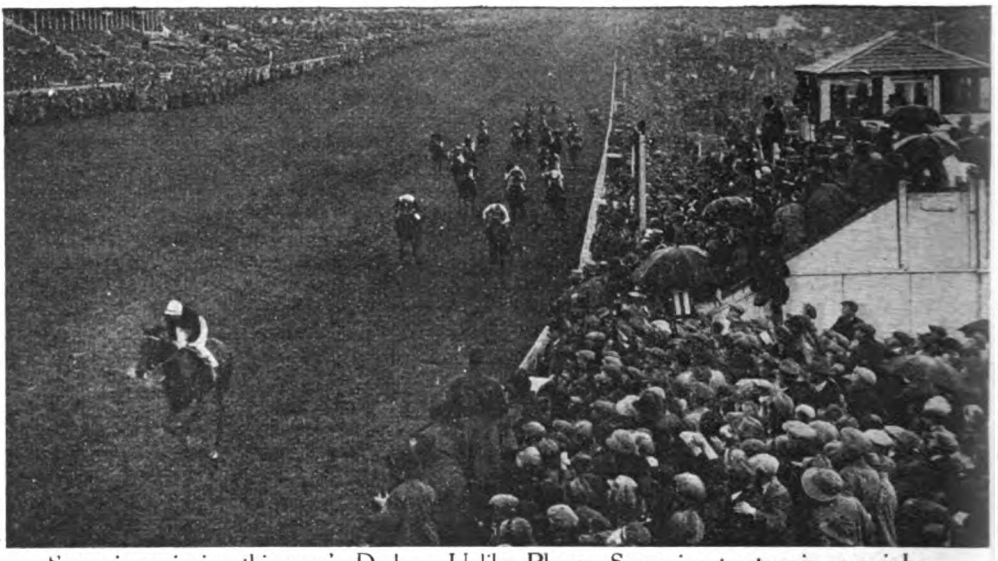
My trainer called in a great veterinary surgeon, who discovered that the horse had heart disease and divers other complaints. He was destroyed a week later.

Horses have natural antipathies. Pharos, one of Lord Derby's good horses and second in last year's Derby, has a rooted objection to rain. So much so that when he paraded for this year's City and Suburban Handicap his quarters were covered with a rug to keep him dry. Sansovino, on the other hand, treats rain as a joke, and a muddy course is an ideal condition. There are scores of horses who seemingly refuse to do their best on a left-handed course (that is, where the turn into the straight is round a left-handed bend, as at Epsom, Newbury, Lingfield, etc.), and scores of others who show an appreciable improvement on a right-handed course.

Here again there is no question of "thinking." I traced the history of four horses that go best on a right-handed course, and found that their first efforts on a round course were at Kempton, Gatwick, and Hurst Park, which are right-handed. Their gallops at home were also right-handed. When they found themselves bearing to the left in subsequent races they became unbalanced and muddled.

It is a question of use and temperament. There is a certain type of horse that dislikes to be alone, and when this sense of loneliness comes to a horse he makes some queer friends. Town Guard needed the companionship of a goat. Papyrus was so attached to a plater in Basil Jarvis's stable that the commoner accompanied him to America when the Derby winner made his remarkable journey. I had a horse who would kick his box to pieces unless he had a favourite hen roosting on the edge of his manger. Do these instances prove reasoning power on the part of the horse?

Pharos, who ran second in last year's Derby, has a rooted objection to rain.



Sansovino winning this year's Derby. Unlike Pharos, Sansovino treats rain as a joke, and was in his element in this year's race.

One would hesitate to deny him such a faculty. If you reject the possibility of a mental equipment, then you may find some difficulty in defining that illusive and much-abused word "class." For it is the fact that this imponderable quantity is something distinct from breeding and conformation. It is the something in a race-horse which cannot be handicapped to a few pounds. In a tight finish it is represented by "the will to win," which brings a horse's nose in front at the winning-post. If he cannot be a rogue, he cannot be honest without conscious thought. He cannot be generous or cowardly.

I am perfectly sure that Tishy thought. This very good filly ran stoutly in all her races except those she ran on the Cesarewitch course. The big autumn handicap starts out of sight of the stands, and there is a gallop of a mile along a course which is chiefly remarkable by reason of the fact that there is an entire absence of spectators. In both her races Tishy refused to gallop after going half a mile, and the generally accepted theory is that at some time or other she had been badly treated or flogged at the particular point where she dropped out. Nothing is further from the truth. Being a filly, and one likely to be valuable for breeding purposes, she was never asked to do too much, and Reginald Day, her then trainer, is a particularly humane man. Besides which, horses at Newmarket are not trained on the courses—there are so many good gallops that it is not necessary, even if it were permissible, to train on the actual course over which they will run.

My theory is that Tishy had the temperamental failing of the public performer. She wanted an audience. The only time she won at Newmarket was when she ran on the Summer course, and a description of that race published at the time says that "there were an unusually large number of spectators down the course to watch the Summer Handicap Plate." She did well at Leicester and Sandown, and probably her best race was at Ascot, where the rails are lined with people almost from start to finish. Tishy, one may suppose, had a passion for the approval of humanity. Alas! poor Tishy! It was unnecessary to take the opinion of Lord Derby. To the man from whose name the greatest of all races takes its name, a horse is almost human in its intelligence.

Another case of a too hasty classification was that of Black Arrow, who was expected to win the Derby and refused to start, though he was flogged by his trainer—since dead—unmercifully. Poor Black Arrow dropped dead soon after, and was found to be suffering from an enlarged liver.

Mr. John Watson.

MR. JOHN WATSON, the well-known race-horse trainer, is equally emphatic on the question of roguery in horses.

"There are very few rogues," he told me, "though there are times when I suspect

that horses think a lot. Horses get to know people and places, and of course they remember, though I doubt whether they think consecutively. It is certain that some horses love racing and some hate it. But, then, I think it is natural for a horse bred for racing to love it, just as it is natural for a kitten to play with a ball of wool. My own experience of the race-horse leads me to believe that he is a most intelligent animal."

Bernard Carslake.

It seems almost sacrilege to fly in the face of popular faith and hold up the legendary genius of the horse as a myth; the more so when we recall some extraordinary instances of what, if it is not conclusive proof of thought, is clear evidence of "intelligent association."

There is no more painstaking student of the horse than

MR. WILLIAM ALLISON,

the Special Commissioner of the *Sportsman*, and incidentally a great breeder. He manages the Cobham Stud, and was instrumental in getting that great sire Tracery brought back to this country

"There is no doubt that horses think — but the less they think the better, so far as winning races goes! Diamond Jubilee thought a lot, and disliked Morny Cannon and Jack Watts. On the other hand, he liked Herbert Jones. The worst genuine rogue I ever saw was Pan, a very good 'chaser, who simply would not go first past the post. I once saw him land over the last fence at Sandown about fifty lengths in front, and it seemed impossible that he could avoid winning, but he switched his tail and swerved all over the course until something else caught him up. He then cantered in second.

"Horses certainly know people who have to do with them, and they also know places —there are many who will pull up at pubs where their former owners used to stop for a drink. Horses certainly object to monotony in their gallops, and this is relieved by such changes as they find at Epsom and Brighton."

It is a fact, as Mr. Allison says, that Diamond Jubilee, the late King Edward's horse, had a rooted objection to Morny Cannon, and as violent an antipathy to Watts. With either of these humane jockeys on his back he alternated mulishness with savagery. But there was a little stable boy who could do anything with him.

"Let the boy ride," said King Edward (who was then Prince of Wales).

"But he has had no experience, your Royal Highness."

"He understands Jones, and Jones understands him," said the King. So Herbert Jones, an unknown boy, was put up on Diamond Jubilee—and won the Derby.

"He went like a lamb for me," said Jones, when I was talking to him two years ago at Goodwood, "but that was because he knew me."

And in this respect Diamond Jubilee resembled another horse that ran at Ascot

Tetratema ran his races in one breath—that is to say, he did not draw a second breath from start to finish.

before the war. There was a jockey he did not like, and he was so suspicious of some trick being played on him that he never left the paddock without screwing his head round and taking a good look at the lad on his back!

Mr. Stanley Wootton.

BERNARD CARSLAKE is one of the finest judges of horses in this country. A fearless rider, an exceptionally strong finisher, he has also trained and owned race-horses since his childhood. There is, by the way, a stupid legend that "Brownie" is nervous of riding on downhill courses such as Epsom, probably due to the fact that he did not win the Derby on Tetratema—a horse that only stayed about seven furlongs in a true run race. Tetratema ran his races in one breath—that is to say, he did not draw a second breath from start to finish. Carslake in point of fact is the most unnervous jockey riding.

He does not agree with Mr. Day's view. "You have only to watch a steeplechase and note how careful horses are not to step upon a fallen rider to realize that they think. A horse will throw himself over to prevent himself touching a man on the ground. Moreover, a horse recognizes and remembers. When I was in Austria-Hungary before the war, I used to ride an animal which for some extraordinary reason took a violent dislike to me. I never punish any horse I ride, and this fellow in particular was always treated well by me. But he loathed me. Whenever I appeared in the saddling ring he went mad. Any other jockey he would tolerate, but for some mysterious cause he would play Old Harry just as soon as he saw my face or heard my voice. It is impossible that he did not think. There are other horses I call to mind who are calm and collected just so long as their riders are in their ordinary clothes. But the moment they see them in racing colours they are in a blue funk. Other horses can stand the colours but break into a perspiration as soon as they see the crowd."

Carslake's view is, however, not inconsistent with Mr. Day's theory. The memory of the great jockey's face and voice might conceivably be associated with a day when the animal was not feeling his best, and when the last thing in the world he wanted to do was to race. It is not so easy to explain the extraordinary care which, as he rightly says, horses display when meeting a fallen rider. One has seen this happen a hundred times, but in all probability this reluctance to step on a man is traceable to the instinctive caution found in all animals. The horse is reacting to the first law of nature. He "knows" that to touch an obstacle may bring him down, and it is certain that he would as assiduously avoid a small bump on the ground or a fallen horse. In the case of a jumper the association of ideas connects touching an obstacle with a fall, and we know that where this lesson has not been learnt horses have stepped upon fallen riders. A brilliant young jockey was killed at Chester in May from this cause.

Town Guard, being of the type that dislikes to be alone, made a companion of a goat.

Photographs by Sport & General and Rouch.

I have seen a horse being brought out of his box to be destroyed stop dead and, planting his two feet squarely on the ground, refuse to move, his trembling frame telling clearly that he knew the fate that was in store for him. In this particular case the

Mr. Jack Jarvis.

old fellow was given a reprieve, and, from being an incorrigibly slow animal, improved so well that he won a five - hundred - pound hurdle race.

One could multiply instances of horses that were sent to run their last race with a sentence of death hanging over them, who have either won or so improved in their running that a respite has been granted.

MR. STANLEY WOOTTON,

a famous rider in his time and now the most successful of the younger school of trainers, is equally emphatic that horses reason.

"Although his thinking is not confined to feeding time," he said, "the one fact which convinces me that he gives certain matters a weighty consideration is his fastidiousness in the matter of feed and water.

"Horses undoubtedly have marked likes and dislikes for individuals, and their antipathies are more or less mysterious. I have known horses that could not bear certain stable boys near them."

A year ago there was a horse in Wootton's stable who hated one inoffensive boy and made several attempts to kill him. One morning he dragged the boy from a horse he was riding and knelt on him. When the boy was rescued and sent home on a hack, the horse broke loose and, chasing the injured youth, dragged him off again!

Stanley Wootton is one of those thorough trainers who keep their eyes on every horse in their stable, and it is impossible that the boy could have hurt the horse in any way without his knowing. One thing is certain, that horses never get over their dislike of those humans who incur their displeasure, and not even the elephant, whose memory is proverbially long, can retain an animosity for a greater length of time.

In racing circles they call Alec Taylor of Manton "the Wizard," and in so far as he can get to the very inside of a horse's mind this nickname is justified.

"Bought one of Taylor's horses, have you?" said a well-known sportsman to another. "I wish you luck! Personally, I never want to buy horses that Taylor is finished with—he speaks their language, and they tell him when they're no good!"

MR. ALEC TAYLOR,

like his father before him, has an extraordinary knowledge of the thoroughbred and studies his peculiarities with the patience of a scientist. His view is that the horse has a mind. No man pays less attention to the popular view, and he has kept horses in training which, according to every authority on racing, have been incorrigible rogues. A recent case in point was Stratford, a wilful, unreliable animal, whom, after costly failures, he coaxed into winning.

Pretty Polly was one of the "thinkers."

Mr. P. P. Gilpin.

If at any race meeting you see a well-dressed young man with an umbrella hooked to his arm, leading a horse out of the paddock, you have seen a man to whom every horse is a thinking wonder.

MR. JACK JARVIS

trained the One Thousand Guineas winner and the second in the Oaks.

"Of course horses think! Put a nervous rider up on a horse and see how quickly the animal knows! If he didn't think, it would make no difference to him whether he was nervous or as bold as a lion. The straight-thinking horse is a joy to deal with. He is equable in temper, honest in running, and he likes his bit of fun just the same as a human."

MR. P. P. GILPIN,

who trained Pretty Polly, and who had Town Guard in his stable and many other fine horses, writes sardonically, hinting what he thinks of the horses in his stable, for this is one of the lean years that come to every trainer.

Yet Mr. Gilpin has had quite a number of "thinkers"—from the placid Pretty Polly to the mud-larking St. Louis.

There is a story that there was a horse in his stable which on one occasion was narrowly beaten by a very good horse in a race, and thereafter, when he found himself in a race with the same animal, took one look at him at the "gate" and refused to start!

I once owned a race-horse that on the morning of a race was found to be lame and was sent home again. The trouble was a minor one—it yielded to treatment in a few days, and a fortnight later he was sent over to a neighbouring racecourse to run in a small plate. That morning he was galloped on the course and went like a lion, but when the trainer brought him out before the race he was dead lame. An examination was made, but no injury could be discovered. Again he was sent home, and this time, without any treatment at all, the trouble disappeared. For a third time he was sent to a course, and for a third time, just before the race, the lameness came on. His number was in the frame, and the stewards were approached to allow him to be withdrawn. But one of them said that he had seen the horse walking about without trouble and permission was refused. I thought the steward had been mistaken, but on interviewing the boy in charge of the equine scoundrel I learnt that the moment the trainer and I had left him he had frisked about like a two-year-old. On the appearance of the trainer, however, the lameness came on. He literally limped to the post—and won the race by three lengths!

This might have been due to stiffness, but a few weeks later he fell shin-sore. You test a horse for this complaint by running your hand down the cannon-bone. If the horse flinches he is shin-sore. He flinched. What is more, for months after, whenever a hand touched his leg, he flinched! On the second occasion I'll swear that he was no more shin-sore than I was, but he knew that by flinching he avoided a hard race.

Shin-sore or not, we ran him and he was beaten two heads; the next time out he tried both the lame stunt and the shin-sore flinch. Subsequently we took no notice of his malingering unless he went short in his gallop. Happily he never learnt this dodge.

There is at the moment a horse in training who can leap like a deer; no fence is too high for him. But for some extraordinary reason he refuses most resolutely to jump the last fence—preferring to take the short cut to the winning-post, which disqualifies him—for every fence must be jumped. I have seen him ten lengths in front with the winning-post in sight. He is not distressed, he is galloping comfortably; he has cleared water jump and rail fence without an effort, and then—

"Watch this horse run out," says the man on the Press stand.

It is the last fence. He is coming straight for it full of running—a violent swerve and he has come triumphantly through the gap, despite the agonized efforts of his jockey.

He knows, of course, that if this performance were not varied with a very occasional win he would most surely find himself in the hands of a veterinary surgeon, and that a humane killer would be fixed to his head, there would be a "plop!" and he would kick himself through the gap that leads to the horses' heaven. And when he is given his last chance, and his trainer tells him solemnly that this is his final appearance on a steeplechase course, he wins!

Is this instinct or thought? Is there some thing in the trainer's tone which reaches his brain and causes him to readjust his plans? If you believe this, you must believe that he reasons, and I think you would be right in so believing.

The deeper one probes into the mystery of a horse's mentality, the more convinced one grows that the horse is a thinking animal. There are many physical reasons why a horse cannot demonstrate his intelligence as readily as a dog—it is impossible to imagine, for instance, a horse leaping up and pawing a human friend or licking his face; but that he has his moments of rumination and that he can give physical expression to mental conditions is, I think, proved beyond doubt.

MY PRETTY COUSIN

by

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

"THEN all I can say," she interrupted, "is that you're a beast and I hate you! I wish you'd never been born, and I don't care if I never speak to you again. When you try and be fatherly like that, you make me absolutely sick!"

This seemed to me to be enough to be going on with, and although at the moment Audrey was my guest—at her favourite tea-shop—I made a movement as if to reach for my hat.

"I'm sorry you feel like that," I said. "If you could tell me how many éclairs you've eaten, I'll take my odious presence away."

"Don't be an owl!" said Audrey. "You know I don't mean it really. It's only that——" And here for a second she looked so exactly as if she were going to cry that I sat down again hastily.

"Here," I said, desperately. "Have some more tea. Have a cigarette. Have a——"

She smiled wanly, and we returned to our original argument.

"I did at least think," she said, and not for the first time, "that you, at any rate, would see my point of view. And yet, when I come to you and ask you for your advice——"

"But I've given you my advice," I cut in, rashly. "I can't help it if it's the same as everyone else's."

My pretty cousin smote the table-cloth with her pretty hand.

"I don't call *that* advice," she said, contemptuously.

"No," I agreed, "I know you don't. But what you want isn't really advice at all. You want to find someone—preferably a relation—who'll tell you that you're right and everybody else is wrong."

"But I am," she said. "And they are."

"Very well, then," I replied. "If you're so certain of it, I can't think why you mind what I say."

"I don't mind," said Audrey. "But I did think that at least you would try and say something sensible. After all, you pretended to be fearfully pleased when I asked you to give me tea."

"There was no pretence about it," I answered. "Of course, if you'd warned me that all you wanted was to be encouraged to defy your parents—well, I mean, that might have made a difference."

"I never dreamt you were so prejudiced," she declared, "or so old-fashioned, or so cowardly. Why, you've never even set eyes on Ronald."

"'Ronald'?" I repeated. "Oh, I see. That's his name, is it?"

She shrugged her shoulders and took a large bite from another éclair. As this gave me the opportunity to say something else, I asked:—

"And do your parents object because ——"

"Don't ask me why they object," she broke in. And then, illogically, she added: "All they seem to care about is whether he's got money or not."

"Oh, I'm sure they don't," I said. "I'm sure what they're thinking of is simply your——"

"Don't say it!" she screamed. "I'm sick and tired of hearing about my happiness. But what I want to know is this: Why should everybody know more about my happiness than I do myself? Is it reasonable?"

I might have dealt with this poser if I hadn't been afraid of being called "fatherly" again. As it was, I evaded it by returning to a previous point.

"But since you've mentioned it," I said,

Copyright, 1924, by Denis Mackail.

"*has* he got any money? I mean to say, it rather takes the edge off things sometimes if one's really hard-up. You see that, don't you?"

"I don't see what it's got to do with you," said Audrey.

"Nothing at all, of course," I assented, quickly. "Only——"

"I haven't the least objection to telling you, though," she went on. "He makes thirty pounds a week."

I made a rapid and, I hoped, an accurate calculation.

"Thirty pounds a week," I echoed. "Why, that's over fifteen hundred a year. There's not much wrong with that, is there?"

I detected my pretty cousin's conscience at work, and then she added:—

"There wouldn't be, if only it were more regular. As a matter of fact, though, he's only had one week's work this year—so far."

"Oh!" I said. And then: "Would you think it a rude question if I asked what his work was?"

She drew herself up proudly in her seat.

"He's a screen artist," she said.

I suppose I must have looked a little puzzled.

"What you would probably call a 'film actor,'" she interpreted.

"Oh!" I said again. "Oh, yes. I see."

She flung down her éclair.

"That's right!" she exclaimed, passionately. "Sneer at him! Turn up your nose at him! Just because someone has a gift that you haven't got yourself. But how could there be any films if nobody ever acted for them? Perhaps you'll tell me that."

I SAW that little was to be gained by dealing with this particular point. I preferred to expatiate on my broad-mindedness.

"I never said a word against it as a profession," I replied. "I am more than ready to believe that ninety-nine film actors out of a hundred are the best fellows in the world. But, all the same, Audrey, thirty pounds a year! I mean to say, it's not an awful lot to get married on. Is it?"

"There'd be my allowance," she said.

"I've no idea what that is," I answered. "But I've not noticed that you've saved very much out of it so far. You're always groaning to me over bills you can't pay."

She flashed an angry look at me, and then—with an effort—seemed to regain her self-control.

"You're very bright this afternoon," she said, somewhat bitterly. "But all this isn't very much help."

"I'm sorry," I apologized. "Let's put the matter of advice on one side, then. Just before you called me a selfish baboon, I think you mentioned the question of assistance. You know I'd do anything I possibly could to help you. What is it you want?"

"I wanted you to go and talk to mother," she said.

"I often do that," I replied. "But what did you want me to talk about?"

She made a petulant movement.

"I had thought," she said, "that you'd have been more on my side."

"But I am on your side," I protested. "I'm always on your side. Only if I've got to go round to Aunt Clara's and butt into a family argument about which I know nothing at all——" At this point my sentence broke down. "Why, I've never even seen the fellow," I finished, weakly.

"Don't call him 'the fellow,'" snapped my pretty cousin.

"I beg your pardon. Mr.—er——"

"'Vanderpool,'" she supplied.

I controlled my features, but a mere negative reception of this name was obviously not enough.

"If you knew anything at all about films," said Audrey, "you'd know that he got the most wonderful notices in the trade papers as Richard the Third."

"But Richard the Third was a hump-back," I said, anxiously. "You don't mean to say that Mr. ——"

She interrupted me with a laugh that was so like the Audrey of old that I felt better at once.

"No, of course not," she said; "you perfect idiot. Look here." She opened her bag and began burrowing among the contents. "Here's his photograph," she added at last.

Somehow or other I resented the presence of Mr. Vanderpool's image in that bag more than anything else that I had so far heard about him. However, I took the photograph with a murmur of gratitude and proceeded to examine it.

The subject was in evening dress and was in the act of lighting a cigarette. Whether his permanent wave were natural or not, I was unable, of course, to tell; but there were certainly traces of make-up around his eyes. This would be, I judged, what is technically known as a "still."

"Don't you think he's awfully good-looking?" asked Audrey at this point.

I hesitated.

"Or are you jealous?" she added, maliciously.

"Not in the least," I said, firmly. And I handed the photograph back to her.

She accepted it with what might, in

"Here's his photograph," she said. "Don't you think he's awfully good-looking?"

anyone else, almost have been described as a grab.

"He's about a million times better-looking than you are—anyway," she observed.

"I think you rather exaggerate the difference," I answered. "But I still don't feel that I know him, somehow. We've had his income and his appearance; but can't you tell me something more about him? How old is he, for instance? Or where did you meet him? If I'm going to be dragged into this affair, I must have the facts."

My pretty cousin had stowed the photograph away again, and now she closed her bag with a snap.

"He's twenty-six," she said. "And I met him at Beryl's studio. I'm sorry I can't tell you the size of his collars, but doubtless that can wait."

"Oh, easily," I answered. There was nothing so very wrong with his age; but I had the very strongest objection to Miss Beryl Ogden, whose pictures had always seemed to me to be an insult to the human intelligence, and whose manner and appearance struck me as equally repulsive. However, Audrey's loyalty to her friends is not a thing with which one can possibly take liberties, so I contented myself with asking:

"And how long have you known Mr. —er—Vanderpool?"

"Three weeks," said Audrey, defiantly.

"Oh," I said. "Have you met any of his relations yet?"

"No," said Audrey. "Ronald has quarrelled with all his relations. Or rather" —she corrected herself—"they have quarrelled with him. They don't seem to realize

that, it a man is a true artist, nothing can stand in the way of his art."

I seemed to hear a faint echo of Mr. Vanderpool's own speech here, but I merely nodded.

"Well," I answered, "I'm confoundedly sorry about it all, Audrey. And if only I were a film director, I might be able to do something. As things are, I'm afraid the only thing is to wait a bit. After all, three weeks isn't a very long time, and perhaps Aunt Clara and Uncle George will change their minds after a bit." I didn't add, "and perhaps you will too," but I suppose some hint of this hope must have crept into my expression, for when I looked up Audrey was glaring at me like a basilisk.

"I did at least think," she said, coldly, "that you would *pretend* to be a little sympathetic. But you're all the same. You all think just because——" And here her voice became thick and unsteady, and I became so panic-stricken that I rushed out with the first thing that came into my head.

"No, no," I said, hastily. "I'm entirely on your side, Audrey. Look here; I tell you what; I'll go round and see Aunt Clara now—at once."

"You will?" She was radiant again.

"Of course I will. That is, if—I mean, if she's in."

"She's always in," said Audrey, as though my aunt's domestic virtue were one of her greatest crimes. I realized that I had gone too far to go back.

"All right," I said. "I'll just pay the bill here, and then we'll go round in a taxi."

I HAD plenty of time during the short drive to regret the task that I had taken on; but Audrey, for some unknown reason, seemed to think that I had only to have five minutes alone with her mother for all difficulties to be straightened out at once.

"Mother would do *anything* that you asked her to," she informed me. "She's always saying how sensible you are."

If Aunt Clara had really said that, then she had been wrong; and never more so than at this moment, when I was preparing to offer my unwanted advice in a matter with which I had absolutely no concern. However, I smiled courageously, and in another minute we had reached our destination.

"I'll hide in father's study," Audrey whispered to me in the hall. "And then you can look in on the way out and tell me what's happened."

"Very well," I said, with forced brightness. And then I followed my old friend the parlour-maid upstairs to the drawing-room.

Aunt Clara seemed delighted to see me, and kissed me on both cheeks.

"This *is* a pleasant surprise," she said. "Have you had tea?"

"Yes," I replied. "I've just had tea with——"

"But you'll smoke, won't you? I never mind *your* cigarettes."

I might have retorted that I never minded Uncle George's cigars; but I kept this thought to myself.

"No, thank you very much," I answered. "I really came because——"

"Oh, not that uncomfortable little chair," said Aunt Clara, again cutting me short. "Come over here. Near me."

I got up and sat down again.

"Audrey's just been telling me——" I began, nervously.

"Don't speak to me about it," interrupted Aunt Clara. "Your uncle's so worried that he's taken the whole day off from his work to play golf. What *can* we do? My poor child; she must be off her head!"

"She didn't strike me as quite that," I ventured.

"But an actor!" exclaimed Aunt Clara. "Worse still; a *film* actor. A dreadful young man who paints his face, who isn't a gentleman, who——"

"Just a moment, Aunt Clara," I said. "Have you actually seen him?"

"Seen him!" she echoed. "Certainly not. Your uncle would have a fit if a man like that came to this house."

"But perhaps," I suggested, "he's better than we—I mean, than you think."

"I never thought to hear you say that," said Aunt Clara, reproachfully. "And I hope you told Audrey how impossible—how absolutely out of the question it was."

I left that point and began on another.

"It occurred to me," I said, "that possibly the mere strength of the opposition at home might be making Audrey imagine—I mean to say that if she saw more of Mr. Vanderpool she might find she liked him less."

Somewhat to my alarm my Aunt Clara had closed her eyes.

"She will *not* see more of him," she declared, firmly.

"But don't you think—I mean, supposing she *did*—that if he's really quite—er—unsuitable, she would realize it? What I'm so afraid of——" I rambled on like this for some time, and when my last feeble paraphrase had flickered out, Aunt Clara suddenly opened her eyes.

"Your uncle would never hear of it," she said.

Rightly or wrongly, I took this shelving

of responsibility to mean that my argument had had some slight effect.

"She's so used to getting her own way," I added. "It would be dreadful if we made a mess of things just because——"

"But how *could* she see more of him?" asked Aunt Clara. "Your uncle has absolutely refused to have him in the house, and I can't possibly allow her to meet him alone."

I took the plunge.

"It struck me," I said, "that if I asked them both to dinner—oh, explaining, of course, that it didn't mean official approval—then it would give her a chance to see him in something more like her own surroundings, and also——"

"Wait!" interrupted Aunt Clara. "I must think."

SHE closed her eyes again, and for the best part of five minutes we sat in complete silence, while the clock ticked loudly on the mantelpiece. Ultimately my Aunt Clara delivered herself of her considered opinion.

"I am not at all sure that it is wise," she said, "and on no account must you say anything to your uncle until I have prepared the ground; but, provided that another woman is present as chaperon, I think perhaps——"

"That's splendid," I broke in, before she could change her mind. "I'll tell you everything that happens, and exactly what I make of Mr. Vanderpool and so forth, and I really believe, you know, that it's far the most sensible plan. If absence is making the heart grow fonder, then——" And I jumped up, embraced my aunt once more, knocked her library book off the whatnot, put it back again, and escaped from the room in a welter of geniality and enthusiasm. I found Audrey waiting on the landing outside, but I don't think she had heard much through the key-hole, for all she said was: "Well?"

"I've got permission to ask you both out to dinner," I said.

My pretty cousin clapped her hands.

"You lamb!" she cried. And then: "To-night?"

I hadn't thought of it as being that very evening, but perhaps it could be managed.

"If you think you can get hold of him," I said.

"I'll ring him up at once," answered my pretty cousin. "Where and when?"

I suddenly realized that my plans for confronting Audrey with the other culprit "in something like her own surroundings" had broken down already. By no possible means could I have two—no, three people to dinner at my flat with less than a couple of hours' warning to the staff. I should have to take them out to a restaurant.

"What about the Serene?" I asked. "How would that suit you?"

"Top-hole," said Audrey. "And what shall we do afterwards?"

It had not occurred to me that it would be necessary to do anything.

"Why," I answered, "I imagined that you would want to talk to your—to Mr.—to——" A happy thought came to my assistance. "You might dance," I suggested.

"Oh, no," said Audrey. "The floor at the Serene is rotten."

I thought I saw what she wanted.

"Perhaps I could get seats for a play, then," I substituted. It seemed a bit unfair that I couldn't send the bill in to Uncle George, but then I had never found Audrey a really economical proposition.

I saw her considering this offer; and then, with a squeak of delight, she came out with a counter-proposal.

"No," she said. "We won't do that. But I'll tell you what. Let's go to the Five Arts Ball. That'd be frightful fun!"

"But," I said, desperately—recalling that the tickets were four guineas each—"I've done nothing but read in all the newspapers for the last week that they were sold right out."

"That doesn't matter," said Audrey. "Ronald knows several people on the committee. He'll get you the tickets all right."

I wondered—with a faint hope—whether he would get them at a professional discount. And then I thought of something else.

"But wait a second," I said. "Isn't fancy dress compulsory?"

"Yes," said Audrey. "But——"

"Well, I can't go, then. I haven't got any fancy dress."

"Oh, but *anything* will do," said Audrey. "I'm sure you can manage something. *Please* don't be an old stick-in-the-mud," she pleaded.

"I'm nothing of the sort," I explained. "But there's another thing, Audrey. We can't all dine at the Serene if we've got to dress up like that."

"Rubbish," said Audrey. "Why, half the people there will be going on to the ball. However, if you're so nervous and self-conscious, you'd better take a private room."

But I drew the line at that. The evening was going to be quite costly enough as it was.

"There's one more thing, though," I went on. "Your mother insisted that I should bring along a chaperon. How'd it be if I tried to get hold of Mrs.——"

"No, no," she interrupted. "I've got a much better idea than that. Let's ask Beryl"

"Miss Ogden?" I said, blenching slightly. "But I don't think your mother——"

"Nonsense," said Audrey. "She's a splendid chaperon. And, besides, she's been simply longing to go to the ball. Now, don't be a spoil-sport."

"But——"

"I'll ring her up now," she ran on. "What time shall I say we're to meet?"

I had an uncomfortable feeling that the evening was passing out of my control. But I saw no way of putting things right.

"Oh, any old time," I answered, beginning to move downstairs.

"Eight o'clock?" asked Audrey, leaning over the banisters.

"All right," I said.

She blew me a cousinly kiss and pirouetted away—presumably to the telephone.

"Lend me six shillings, there's a dear," said Audrey. "We've got nothing to pay the cabman with. Oh, by the way, this is Ronald."

As soon as I got back to my flat, I rang the bell for my man.

"Oh, Judson," I said.

"Yes, sir?" said Judson.

"I've just decided to go to the Five Arts Ball to-night. Can you suggest any means by which I could procure a—er—a dress?"

Judson's face took on the unhelpful look of something in an aquarium.

"A fancy dress?" he inquired.

"Yes. Of course."

"For to-night?" he added.

"Yes," I said again.

"No, sir," he said. "Unless you was to hire one."

I did my best to arouse a little enthusiasm in him.

"That's a splendid idea," I said. "But do you know the name of any place where——"

"I'll go and see, sir."

He had left the room before I had time to express any preference for the style of dress or to set any limit to its cost. I waited anxiously for his return, but when I eventually rang the bell again it produced Mrs. Judson, who informed me that her husband had gone out.

"Oh!" I said. "All right. It doesn't matter."

At about half-past seven—just when I was beginning to despair of ever seeing him again—he suddenly reappeared, slightly out of breath.

"I've had a rare time, sir," he told me. "Such a crowd at all the costoomiers'. But I've found you something at last. They wanted twenty guineas for the evening, but I managed to get it for fifteen."

For a moment I felt quite faint.

"What is it?" I managed to inquire.

"It's a comic bandit, sir," said Judson, gravely. "The young lady said it was very laughable. There's a nose, sir, that should go with it; but——"

I groaned.

"Never mind about the nose," I said. "Where's the rest of it?"

"I've put it out on your bed, sir," said Judson. "Except the boots," he added.

"Well, I'm very grateful to you, Judson," I replied, with an effort. "Will you get me a taxi at five minutes to eight?"

"Very good, sir," said Judson. And I went through into my bedroom to learn the worst.

TWENTY minutes later I was attired in a dirty doublet fastened with a colossal buckle (this I took to be "comic") and a pair of rather tight breeches. Every attempt to get into the big leather boots having utterly failed, I was forced to complete my apparel with a pair of golf stockings and a pair of pumps. I can truthfully say that I looked like nothing on earth.

The only merit in this odious costume—which bore an unpleasant smell of stale scent—was that a leather pouch was attached to the belt. In this I placed my handkerchief, my cigarettes, all my available cash, and my cheque-book, and then—assuming a black overcoat and opera-hat—I set forth.

As I waited in the entrance-hall of the Serene Hotel, with my overcoat buttoned closely up to the chin, I looked anxiously about for signs of other persons in fancy dress. But in this respect Audrey's forecast proved to have been incorrect. One faultlessly-attired group after another passed by me—staring curiously, I noticed, at my ankles—but not so much as a pierrot could I detect. I was just considering the possibility of dashing home and changing back again when, with a sound of cheerful laughter, my guests arrived in a bunch.

"Lend me six shillings, there's a dear," said Audrey. "We've got nothing to pay the cabman with. Oh, by the way, this is Ronald."

To my annoyance, Mr. Vanderpool, who extended his hand in the most friendly way, was dressed in what are generally known as immaculate evening clothes.

"Such a bore," he said, languidly, "havin' to put on fancy togs. I shall hire a cloak when I get to the hall. Much better notion, what?"

Why the dickens hadn't I thought of that way out?

"But the others have dressed up, haven't they?" I asked, hopefully. "I mean Audrey and Miss—er—Miss Ogden."

"Oh, rather," answered Mr. Vanderpool. "You wait till they come out of the cloak-room." And then he suddenly became confidential. "Look here, old man," he added, "I wonder if you'd mind paying me for those tickets now? I'm a bit short, and——"

"Oh, certainly," I said, feeling for my pouch. "Sixteen guineas, isn't it?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Vanderpool. "'S a matter of fact, I had to take 'em off a pal; and he stuck me for a tenner each. Awful ramp, of course; but then Audrey——"

"I'll have to give you a cheque, I'm afraid," I broke in, coldly.

"That's all right, old man," laughed Mr. Vanderpool. "As long as it isn't a dud, what?"

How *could* my pretty cousin have—— But at this moment she and Miss Ogden both emerged from the cloak-room, and I was called on to express my admiration for their dresses.

There is something terribly unfair about the distinctions between the sexes. Audrey might call herself a shepherdess, and Miss Ogden might describe herself as a Jazz Columbine (whatever that is) until they were both black in their respective faces, but the fact remained that to the masculine eye there was nothing more peculiar or noticeable about their clothes than those

of any other women in the hotel. One took their word for it that they were in fancy dress, but honestly there was nothing to show it. Whereas I——

I pulled myself together and suggested a general move into the restaurant.

"But aren't you going to take your overcoat off?" asked Audrey.

I pretended not to hear her. It was far preferable to be taken for an eccentric foreigner with a bad cold than to shed that overcoat and appear as a solitary and conspicuous maniac. In another minute I had tucked my legs well under the table, and —egged on by my three guests—was ordering champagne.

THE room was insufferably hot, and it was astonishing how openly the other visitors stared at me; but painful and embarrassing as all this was, it was nothing compared to the behaviour of Mr. Ronald Vanderpool and, I may add, of Miss Beryl Ogden. Mr. Vanderpool's one idea—having succeeded in penetrating into a restaurant where he ought never to have been admitted —was to attract the attention of as many other people in the room as possible. With this end in view he talked at the top of his voice, gesticulated violently and theatrically, and laughed in a high and hysterical manner at everything and nothing. He also practised chain-smoking from the contents of a gold-and-platinum cigarette-case right through the excellent dinner which I was providing.

Miss Ogden—who, if I may say it of a lady, drank like a mermaid—was certainly quieter in her methods, but in her own way she made me just as uncomfortable. In confidential asides she kept on telling me what a perfect couple Audrey and Mr. Vanderpool would make, inviting me to congratulate her on having brought them together, and throwing meaning glances at me whenever they looked at or spoke to one another. By way of accentuating their new relationship, she also edged her chair closer and closer to mine, until finally she was able to accompany her incessant commentary by nudging me frequently with her elbow.

More than once I saw the *maitre d'hôtel* —who, until this evening, I had counted among my friends—watching us balefully from the background. There was little difficulty in reading his thoughts. He was waiting for the moment when some last straw should enable him to ask us to leave.

As for my pretty cousin—prettier than ever in her shepherdess's dress—she seemed, to my disgust, to be hanging on Mr. Vanderpool's words. The more he shouted and boasted, the more devotedly she gazed at him. I looked in vain for any sign that his exhibition of ill-breeding was affecting her infatuation. Once or twice she turned away towards me, but each time as I sought to address her she broke into a peal of silvery laughter.

"I can't help it," she said. "You've no idea what you look like."

At length and at last, though, the terrible meal came to an end. My suggestion that a taxi should be ordered to take us on to the ball was instantly amended by Miss Ogden.

"Two taxis, you mean," she said, digging me in the ribs and leering up into my face.

"Very well," I replied. And then, as the two women went off to get their cloaks, I hastily wrote out a couple of cheques. One I passed to Mr. Vanderpool, who said "Right-o, old man," and put it in his pocket. The other I gave to our waiter; but even the mammoth tip with which I sought to prove my essential respectability left him unmoved. No smile appeared on his face, and indeed I could hardly blame him.

"See you at supper," said Audrey, as she and Mr. Vanderpool stepped into the first taxi. Then she put her head out of the window. "Do you mind paying the man?" she asked.

I did so.

"Come on," said Miss Ogden, pulling me by the arm. "What are you dreaming about?"

It was perhaps fortunate that the night hid my expression. We entered the second cab in silence, and drove swiftly away to the Round Hall.

I don't know whether you have ever been to one of these Five Arts affairs. It is quite possible that a large number of the participants are hypnotized, by the expense of their tickets and the preliminary newspaper puffs, into the belief that they are enjoying themselves. But reduced to plain facts, the entertainment consists simply of a colossal din, a colossal crowd, a quantity of dazzling lights, and several million cubic feet of very bad air. As was my duty, I invited Miss Ogden to dance with me; but whether because of the general congestion, or because I was always looking over my shoulder to try and find Audrey, the thing was not a success. We jogged round, bumping into other couples and tripping over the various accessories with which Little Bo-Peeps and Executioners and others had insisted on encumbering themselves. We clapped our hands excitedly whenever the music stopped. We clutched each other and staggered off again as soon as it started. Beneath my golf stockings my shins were black and blue, and I had

developed both a sore throat and a headache. But I never saw either Audrey or Mr. Vanderpool, and Miss Ogden—despite the alarming colour of her face—never suggested that we should stop.

Finally I had to suggest it myself.

"Would you mind," I asked, hoarsely, "if we sat out for a bit?"

To my surprise and pleasure she agreed at once. I offered her my arm, and after walking up and down several flights of stairs and along several hundred yards of corridor we at length came on an empty seat. I sat heavily down and undid the top button of my tunic.

"That's better," I said, with a sigh of relief. "I suppose we ought to see about supper in a minute, but——"

"Oh, no. Do let's stay here," interrupted Miss Ogden. "I'm so longing for a talk with you."

I turned my head, and was annoyed to find how unnecessarily close she was sitting to me.

"I want to know what you *really* think about Audrey and Ronald," she said.

"Well," I answered, cautiously, "as long as two people are genuinely fond of one another——"

"Oh, I do so agree," said Miss Ogden, coming still nearer. "You know, I thought Ronald was rather keen on *me* once. But——"

"But what?" I asked, looking at her in some astonishment.

"But the real thing is so different," she added.

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," I answered. And, indeed, this was no less than the truth.

Miss Ogden darted a sidelong glance at me.

"You bad fellow," she said. "Do you think I haven't guessed why you had this party this evening? Do you think I didn't see through your little scheme?"

"There was no scheme at all," I protested. "It was just an arrangement by which two people could meet each other without——" I broke off abruptly, for she had given me a look which had suddenly made my blood run cold.

"Why, you don't mean to say——" I began.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "I guessed as soon as Audrey telephoned. Do you think I haven't noticed how you kept away from my studio? But you needn't keep away any longer. We'll tell everybody to-morrow; we'll put it in the papers, and——"

There is no excuse for what I did at this point. But I saw a bottomless abyss opening beneath my feet, and in another second—unless I took action at once—it would be too late to escape. Without a word to Miss Ogden, without another look in her direction, I snatched my hand from her attempted grasp, bounced off the sofa, and began to

On and on I flew;

run. I ran like the wind, up and down stairs, round corners, along passages, and once right through the buffet. The anguished cries which had at first followed me died down; but whether I had really shaken her off or whether she was just saving her breath for the pursuit, I had no idea. If people stared at me, then I never saw them. My one

thought was that, at whatever cost, I must never be overtaken. On and on I flew; and then, suddenly, speeding round an acute angle, I collided violently with a body in my path.

"Audrey!" I gasped, catching at her to prevent her falling.

She clung to me like a leech.

and then, suddenly, I collided violently with a body in my path.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed. "Oh, thank Heaven it's you. Take me away. Oh, please take me away at once!"

"But Mr. Vander——"

Her face took on a look of piteous frenzy.

"You're *never* to mention his name to me again," she said. "You're never to ask me anything about him any more. I've finished with him. I can't tell you how he's behaved since we've been here. Oh," she ground her teeth, "he's *impossible!*"

My heart leapt wildly up. Then and there I swore that never would I speak to her of Mr. Vanderpool again, and I have kept my word. I gave an attendant half a crown to get my overcoat and hat, and in another three minutes, still supporting my almost swooning cousin, I was safely in a taxi.

We drove to Aunt Clara's house in silence, but Audrey leant against me so that I felt her sobs right through my tunic. I may admit, also, that—although I believe she was unaware of it—she was holding my hand.

It was on the doorstep, whither I had accompanied her to assist with her latchkey, that she spoke to me again.

"I must have been mad," she said. "But you won't tell them anything, will you?" With a movement of her head she indicated her presumably sleeping parents.

"Rather not," I declared.

"And we'll have some more fun together soon, won't we?"

I thought the word "fun" singularly ill-chosen, but I nodded my otherwise unqualified agreement.

"Could you take me out to-morrow?" she asked, suddenly.

I hesitated; I thought of Miss Ogden; and then—like a fool—I said:—

"I'm sorry, Audrey, but I've just arranged to go abroad for a bit."

"*Oh!*" said my pretty cousin, angrily.

Without a word she passed quickly over the threshold and slammed the door in my face.

CAPRICORN

BY

LYNN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED LEETE

BETWEEN the time wee Mr. Anthony, the solicitor, spent on sport—said Mr. Patrick Murphy—an' the time he spent robbin' the public in the natural course of his business, he had very little left for anythin' else; an' his house an' garden was allowed to run clean wild. The back premises was clean beyond mentionin' altogether; but even the garden at the front was a holy show. If ould Adam started life in this part of the world (an' McSwiney, the schoolmaster of Tullydrum, a great Gaelic scholar, made out it was more than likely) his was about the last spade was ever put in that particular bit of ground; an' if the railin's ever got a touch of paint it must ha' been some was left over after Noah had done caulkin' the Ark. You'd think ould tin-cans grew in it like weeds. If a piece of paper blew up the street it was sure to come to an anchor in Mr. Anthony's front garden, I suppose because that was the only place where it was sure of not bein' disturbed.

But bad an' all as Mr. Anthony's garden was in itself, it looked ten times worse on account of him livin' next door to Father John Connolly, the parish priest of Ballygullion; for Father John was very neat and natty, an' kept his garden like a nursery. Mr. Anthony used to say in a joke it was out of sheer bigotry, just to show him up.

An' then Mr. Anthony got engaged to Miss Livingston, an' ye never seen such a change in your life. First of all he had the house painted, an' then the railin's; then he got the ground dug up; and the next thing was he sent off to Mr. Hastings's demesne

an' had the front garden crammed full of evergreen bushes of all kinds, an' them clipped as close as a policeman's head before the monthly inspection.

Of course, bein' Mr. Anthony, when he took the notion at all, it driv everythin' else out of his head ; an' I need hardly tell you that before a fortnight he considered himself fit to give lessons to Mr. Hastings's head gardener.

As soon as the place was in any sort of order nothin' would do him but I must go round an' see it ; an' I will say it was a picture.

Mr. Anthony was fair upsettin' with pride.

"If I didn't keep this place in any great trim before, Pat," sez he, swellin' himself out, "it wasn't because I didn't know how. Cast your eye over them shrubs at the front there. Look at that veronica. I got that from Kew Gardens. There's not a pink veronica of that particular shade in all Ireland. Old Hastings's gardener near burst when he saw it. Come across the road till you get the general effect. Is there another house in Ballygullion to compare with it ? "

"Well, barrin' Father John's next door," sez I.

"Tut, blethers," sez Mr. Anthony. "Not a patch on mine. The poor old man does his best, of course ; but he hasn't the knowledge. He hasn't laid his mind to it the way I have. There's not the finish, Pat. You can see that, can't you ? "

An' what would I do but agree with him, especially on a warm evening an' me with a bad thirst on me ? So we went inside an' he produced the bottle, an' I buttered him up that effectually that I near wrecked the pink veronica bush as I went out of the front gate.

Passin' Father John's house I looked into *his* front garden ; an' there was the old man waterin' flowers.

"Good evenin', Pat," sez he. "I saw you near spikin' yourself on Mr. Anthony's gate. I would gather that you haven't been runnin' down his garden."

"Why would I, your reverence ? " sez I. "It's a very nice wee garden."

"It's all that," sez Father John. "I suppose he thinks it's near as good as mine ? "

"He thinks it's a deal better," sez I.

"Well, sweet bad luck to him for a conceited little rascal," sez Father John ; "did you ever hear the like of that in your life ? What do you think about it, Pat ? "

"Well, to tell you the truth, your reverence," sez I, "you still have the best of it, but not just as much as I would have liked for the honour of the Church."

"There you are now," sez Father John, rubbin' his chin. "That's the Taylors' goat. She comes down this road like a mildew, an' divil a green leaf she's goin' to leave me at all, at all. Look at my veronicas, an' my arbutus, an' even my young clianthus. God forgive me, I sin my soul over her."

'It's the Orange trainin' she got from the family, Father John," sez I, chaffin' him a bit.

"Is it ? " sez he. "Take your time till she finds out poor wee Mr. Anthony's garden, an' then you'll see. There's neither religion nor politics in a goat ; only divilment. You an' Mr. Anthony is very thick. Wait till you hear the tale of woe he'll have for you one of these days."

He was right too. The next time I was in Mr. Anthony's office he near burst a blood-vessel when I asked him about his garden.

"Garden ! " sez the wee man, jumpin' out of his chair an' stampin' up an' down the room. "I have no garden. It's gone. Every vestige of it is in the belly of a confounded goat this minit."

"A goat ? " sez I, lettin' on to know nothin'.

"Yes," sez he, "a goat, a cursed yellow animal with the appetite of a rhinoceros an' the digestion of a stone-crusher. Why the Almighty ever wasted a swarm of locusts on the ancient Egyptians I can't tell, when one goat would have devastated the whole valley of the Nile. I'll murder her," sez he, prancin' round. "I'll be hanged for her, or at any rate prosecuted. What's the handiest way of killin' a goat, Pat ? " sez he, stoppin' an' lookin' at me very vicious. "An' it needn't be too painless, either."

"Ye can't kill a goat, Mr. Anthony," sez I. "If they don't choose to die of themselves the case is hopeless."

"I believe you," sez Mr. Anthony, "about this brute anyway. She has eaten as much garbage as would choke a main sewer, an' confound me but she's thrivin' on it. I saw her goin' up the street the other day chewin' a piece of a tin-can as if it was sugar-stick. Come up to the house, Pat—I'm finished here—till you see the havoc she has done."

AN' sure enough there was a sore change come over Mr. Anthony's front garden. There wasn't a leaf or a twig to be seen anywhere. The very bark was off the bushes, an' the only green left about the place was the paint on the railin's.

"Look at it, Pat," sez Mr. Anthony, very pitiful. "Will you just look at it ? An' one week ago that was the finest front garden in Ulster, aye in Ireland."

"I'll hold you what you like," sez I, "it's a case of pure religious bitterness. The Taylors have trained the goat to eat the parish priest's garden, an' she's devoured yours in mistake."

" I'll hold you what you like that you're a blasted old fool," sez Mr. Anthony, flyin' into a rage. " What the divil does a goat care about parish priests ? She'd eat the saddle off King William's white horse just as fast."

" Well, you're surely not goin' to let her get the better of you, Mr. Anthony ? " sez I. " I never saw you bested before."

" Now did you, Pat ? Did you ? An' I'm not bested this time," sez he, perkin' up. " I'll circumvent her before all's over, only I haven't just hit yet on how to do it."

" Have you tried barbed wire ? " sez I.

" Have I tried blazes ? " sez he. " Have I tried a machine-gun ? If I put barbed wire all round the house—an' nothin' less would do—how am I going to get out and in myself ? But I've tried sticks, an' I've tried stones. I tried tying up a dog to one of the bushes, an' all he did was to scrape up the whole of my Spring bulbs, about the only thing the goat couldn't have done for herself. I tried hirin' wee Sonny Morrison to keep her out while I was at the office, an' she near butted him through the hall door. Come on inside till we have a drink. We might devise somethin' over a drop of whisky."

I STOOD lookin' out of the window of his dinin'-room while he was gettin' the bottle out of the sideboard, an' as I looked here what comes up the street but the goat herself, draggin' a long rope after her with an iron stake at the end of it that she had been tethered to. She stuck her head in between Father Connolly's railin's two or three times ; but she had ate everything within reach long ago, an' the front gate was closed, so she came on to Mr. Anthony's, I suppose, just to see if there was any provender left. I said nothin'.

She wandered about a bit, cleanin' up two or three pieces of bark here and there ; an' then, as Mr. Anthony came forward with the bottle, he spotted her.

" There she is, by Heaven," sez he, slappin' down the whisky an' makin' for the front door. " I have her this time," sez he, pullin' a big blackthorn stick out of the hall-stand as he went. " Come on an' help me, Pat." But I let on I never heard him an' went back into the dinin'-room to see the fun through the window. For thinks I to myself, if he's as unhandy with a stick as he is with a gun, the Lord knows who it'll light on.

When I looked out of the window the goat was on the garden path, between Mr. Anthony an' the gate, an' as full of fight as a badger. Every time he raised the stick she up on her hind-end an' butted at him wicked. Neither him nor her had got a blow in yet as far as I could see ; but just as I sat down on the window seat she made a wicked charge. Mr. Anthony gave back, the stone steps took him behind, an' down he sat on them with a thud that jerked the eyeglass out of his eye an' wrecked it into flinders. The goat, seein' her chance, butted in hard, an' would likely ha' wrecked Mr. Anthony's eye as well as the glass if he hadn't grabbed her by a horn with one hand. The next minit he was on his feet, an' the pair of them was spinnin' round each other like a dog chasin' his tail.

" Let go, Mr. Anthony, let go ! " sez I, throwin' up the window.

" I can't," he gasps at me. " If I do I'll fall, I'm that giddy ; an' then she'll massacre me. Come out an' help me."

But with that the goat shook herself free, an' out of the gate like a sky-rocket, with her tail twitchin' a hundred to the minit, pullin' the rope after her. Mr. Anthony gave a couple of staggers an' then stood swayin' on his feet as if he was in an earthquake.

" Come off the rope," I shouts ; for I seen what was goin' to happen. But I was too late. That very minit the rope tightened like a fiddle-string, an' I think the first part of Mr. Anthony that hit the ground was the back of his head. I jumped out of the window, an' at the same time Father John run round out of his garden, where he'd been watchin' the last round, an' between us we armed Mr. Anthony into the dinin'-room.

Presently he opened his eyes and looked round him.

" What happened, Pat ? " sez he. So I told him.

" Was that it ? " sez he. " I thought I had hit myself on the head with the stick. Go away, Father John," sez he. " I want to say what I think about that horned cormorant, an' it's goin' to be no place for a Christian clergyman."

" Don't be sinnin' your soul an' wastin' your time," sez Father Connolly. " Let the three of us put our heads together an' see what we can do."

" You wouldn't think of havin' a word with Mrs. Taylor, your reverence ? " sez I.

" I would not, Pat," sez Father John. " I'd sooner face the goat. That woman has a tongue like sulphuric acid. But here's Mr. Anthony has the gift of the gab, an' a deal of practice ; maybe he could soother her a bit."

" Good gracious," sez Mr. Anthony, leppin' up. " An' I never thought of it. Of course that's the thing to do. I'll go an' see her this minit. I'm not afraid of her tongue. I never saw the woman yet I couldn't talk round if I laid my mind to it.

Half a sovereign and a bit of soft soap an' the goat is banished. You'd better come with me, Father John," sez he, goin' out into the hall for his hat. "It'll be worth listenin' to, mind you."

"Better go by yourself, Mr. Anthony," sez Father John. "You can tell me all about it when you come back."

"Don't move, then, for ten minits or so," sez Mr. Anthony, makin' for the door. "I'll have good news for you when I do come. Should I get her to kill the goat or sell her, Father John?" sez he, pausin' on his step.

"Just do the best you can, Mr. Anthony," sez Father Connolly. "I'll leave it in your hands. . . . He thinks because he talked round Miss Livingston he can blarney the whole female sex, Pat; but I doubt he'll know more about it before we see him again."

We sat there crackin' for five or ten minutes, an' then Father John riz to his feet an' looked out.

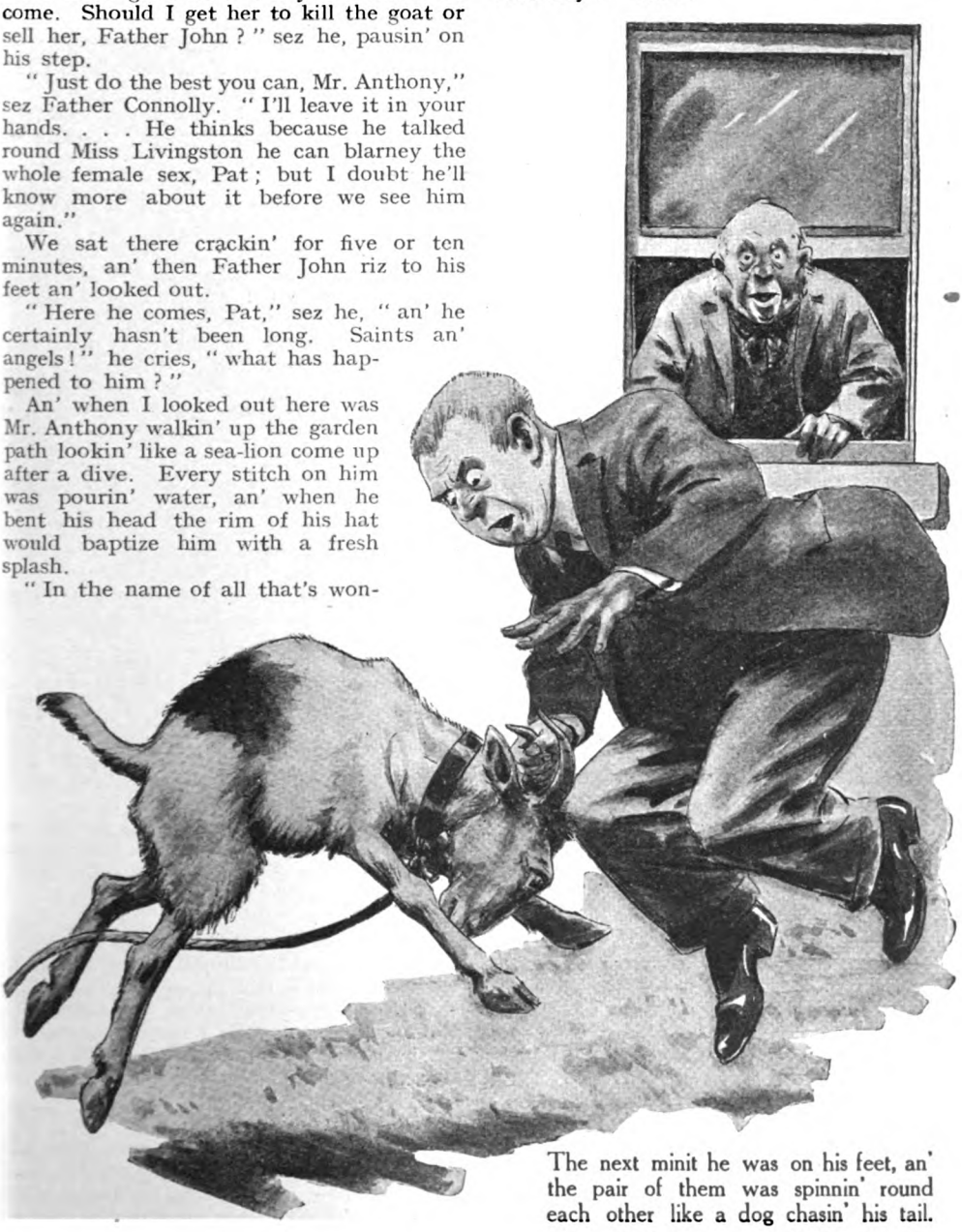
"Here he comes, Pat," sez he, "an' he certainly hasn't been long. Saints an' angels!" he cries, "what has happened to him?"

An' when I looked out here was Mr. Anthony walkin' up the garden path lookin' like a sea-lion come up after a dive. Every stitch on him was pourin' water, an' when he bent his head the rim of his hat would baptize him with a fresh splash.

"In the name of all that's wonderful what has happened to you, Mr. Anthony?" sez I, when we'd got him into the kitchen.

"It was that she-divil, Mrs. Taylor," sez he, gaspin' between every word. "Reach me the dishcloth till I wipe my face; an' Mary"—to the girl—"do you run for the whisky. This is a case of bronchitis, or maybe pleurisy."

"What did you *say* to the woman, Mr. Anthony?" sez I.



The next minit he was on his feet, an' the pair of them was spinnin' round each other like a dog chasin' his tail.

"What the divil would I say?" sez Mr. Anthony, in a rage. "I told her I wanted a few words with her about her goat."

"An' what did *she* say, Mr. Anthony?" sez Father John.

"She didn't say anythin'," sez Mr. Anthony. "She was washin' the kitchen floor, an' she just riz up an' threw the bucket of dirty water about me." An' with that he went off into a string of oaths that beat all I've ever heard from him, an' that's sayin' somethin'!

"Mr. Anthony, Mr. Anthony dear," sez Father John, "stop, stop. Think of your immortal soul."

"Well, then, Father John," sez Mr. Anthony, "do you curse her for me, in a regular way, an' see if that'll have any effect."

"I'll do nothin' of the sort," sez Father Connolly. "In the first place," sez he, "I question whether it would have any effect. You see, Mr. Anthony," goes on the old man, winkin' at me, "she's an Orange goat, an' I doubt whether I'd have any jurisdiction over her. In my opinion, the curses of a parish priest would hop off her like hailstones. Then there's another thing that I think you were forgettin' when you were usin' that shockin' language—to curse anything is to wish the divil to enter into it. Now the beast is bad enough as it is, but what harm she might do this town with the divil inside her there's no man could tell."

"I don't care if she butts down the Town Hall," says Mr. Anthony, very savage, "if the walls'll only fall on her. The divil *is* in her," says he.

"Tut, tut," sez Father John, "that's wicked talk; you'll have no luck after it. Show a Christian spirit to the poor animal. After all, she's only actin' after her nature. Just do as I'm doin'. Look on her depredations as a trial that has been sent you for your own good. Maybe it'll take a while off your time in Purgatory."

"I don't believe in Purgatory," sez Mr. Anthony, "an' I'm not very sure that I believe in the divil. But divil or no divil I'll best that brute yet."

"Well, you won't," sez Father John. "Mark my words, you won't. I've been a bit of a gardener ever since I was a curate, an' I've come to the conclusion that goats are part of the first curse, an' that there's no use strugglin' against them. An' to back my opinion I'll tell you what I'll do. You know that little silver-mounted fowlin'-piece of mine that you've been breakin' the Tenth Commandment about ever since you shot that snipe with it by mistake? Well, you have a copy of Titian's Holy Family on your wall there that has no business to be in the house of a blasphemer like yourself; an' I'll wager my gun against it that the goat bests you in the end."

"Done!" sez Mr. Anthony. "You're witness, Pat. An' I'll put a time limit on the bet. I'm to be married this day month. If I haven't got the better of that goat before my weddin'-day the picture is yours."

"I'll be shootin' snipe on my honeymoon, Pat," sez Mr. Anthony, when Father John had gone. "I'll fetch the gun with me just to show what I can do."

"Take care you don't be shootin' Mrs. Anthony," sez I. "Ye blew the ear off Simon Kirkwood's mule with the same wee gun. But ye haven't got the gun yet, an' judgin' by the way you've come off with the goat while I've been about, ye never will."

"The gun is mine as sure as if I had her hangin' on the wall there," sez he. "It's a sin to take her off the old man on a certainty; an' if he hadn't said I shot that snipe by accident I wouldn't take her off him. The goat is as good as dead this minit. I have it all planned. It must have been that bucket of water that cleared my head. The only thing that's botherin' me is, should I send Mrs. Taylor a pound of conscience money or thirty shillings?"

IT wasn't a week after till I got a note from Mr. Anthony askin' me to call at his office.

"Shut the door," sez he, when I went into his private room. He walked up an' down the floor a couple of times before he spoke again, an' I could see something had vexed him.

"Pat," he bursts out suddenly, "what's about a fair price for a yearlin' calf?"

"A yearlin' calf?" sez I. "You're not going into the cattle trade, surely?"

"No," he sez very short, "I am not."

He walked up and down the floor again, lookin' a bit shamefaced.

"It's that d——d goat," he bursts out, hittin' the desk a thump that made the inkbottle throw a somersault into the waste-paper basket. "You mind me tellin' you I had a plan?"

"I do," sez I. "What was it?"

"As I passed the church comin' from that woman Taylor's, it came on me like a flash that green yew-tree leaves would kill anythin' on four feet. So I stole a branch out of the churchyard a couple of nights after an' left it in the front garden, with two cabbages for bait."

"An' did she eat it?" sez I.

"She came in the very next day an' devoured the cabbages an' everythin' else movable about the place barrin' the knocker on the front door; an' would you believe

me, the divil a lip she ever put on thet yew."

"Well," sez I, "what odds if she didn't? There's no harm done?"

"Is there not?" sez Mr. Anthony. "Is there not? A yearlin' bull-calf of Ferguson, the butcher's, came gawkin' down the road yesterday evenin'—the greedy brainless brute—an' *he* ate it. What have I to send Ferguson?"

"Is the bullock dead?" sez I.

"Oh, dear, no, not at all," sez Mr. Anthony, grindin' it out in a kind of a cold rage. "It's his birthday, an' I'm sendin' Ferguson a cheque to buy him a silver ring for his nose. Don't you know as well as I do that green yew-tree leaves would kill a rhinoceros?"

"Not if he didn't eat them," sez I.

"I don't care a curse," sez Mr. Anthony. "She'll eat them yet, or, anyway, she'll eat something that'll not be good for her health. You're laughing at me, Pat, but I'll best her before I'm done, an' I'll win that gun, too. It's three weeks to the weddin', an' there'll be a funeral in the Taylor family before that, or my name's not Anthony. Oh, by the way, Pat," sez he, as I riz to go, "are you going out to Kirkwood's auction this day week?"

"I am," sez I.

"I have carriage of the sale," sez he. "Call round for me at one o'clock an' I'll drive you out. Did you not know?" sez he, seein' me starin' at him. "I've got a two-seater motor-car for the missus an' myself to go about in. I have it home these four days."

"Four days?" sez I. "Thank you all the same, Mr. Anthony, but if you don't mind, I'll walk to the auction."

"I suppose you think I can't drive the car," sez he.

"Well, of course," sez I, seein' him a bit huffed, "you're more used to horses."

Here was Mr. Anthony walkin' up the garden path lookin' like a sea-lion come up after a dive.

"Horses or cars, they're all the same to me," sez Mr. Anthony. "It's all a matter of hands. If you can drive one you can drive the other." ("An' that's the God's truth," sez I to myself.) "There's my certificate," sez he. "I didn't get that for nothin', did I? I tell you I could drive that car in an' out among ninepins. I'll call for you at one o'clock, an' more than that, I'll bring you word of the death of that yellow divil of a goat at the same time."

There was no help for it short of insultin' Mr. Anthony for ever; so at one o'clock on the day of the auction I told the wife what part of the kitchen floor I'd buried our bit of savin's in, an' got up beside Mr. Anthony.

I must ha' had some decent body's prayers; for he fetched me to the auction an' back again as steady as a rock. We reached Ballygullion about dusk, an' just as we entered the town it come into my head that he had never mentioned the goat.

"Have you won that gun yet, Mr. Anthony?" sez I.

The car took a twist in his hands, an' run near half up the Meetin'-house steps.

"I'll never win it," sez Mr. Anthony, when he had quieted the car down again. "Never, by Heavens—an' I thought I had her, too. I put my revolver in my pocket the other night, an' was temptin' her out the Drumquin Road with two carrots, an'

damme, when she had the second carrot ate she up an' butted me into Jackson's mill-dam. She may eat the front gate an' the railin's an' finish up with

An' just as he spoke, out of his garden comes the goat, an' dashes in front of the car.

the hall-door steps as far as I'm concerned. I'm done with her. Hold hard, Pat," sez he, as he came near his own house. "There's a sharp turn into the garage."

An' just as he spoke, out of his garden comes the goat, an' dashes in front of the car.

Mr. Anthony let fly an oath, an' I uttered a prayer. The car took a swoop on two wheels, an' just as we were about half a second from Eternity an' Peter Mason's gable-wall away it swooped round on the other tack an' straight for Mr. Anthony's own railin's. I shut my eyes. There came a terrible crash. I bounced off the glass screen an' back into my seat again; an' the next minit Mr. Anthony was scramblin' over me an' out of the car.

"Quick, Pat!" sez he. "Give me a hand."

I jumped out after him, an' here was the goat lyin' in the road.

"In with her into the car," sez Mr. Anthony. "Nobody's seen us yet. Run an' open the yard gate."

Away I went like a hare; but before I got that length Mr. Anthony whizzed past me into the garage without waitin' for the gate to be opened. I picked up one of his lamps and ran after him.

The two front mudguards an' the other lamp were in porridge, but Mr. Anthony didn't care a rush.

"What did I tell you?" sez he. "Didn't I say I'd get the better of that brute? You thought she was goin' to be too many for me. You know you did. But I never worried. I'm hard to beat, Pat, at the law or anythin' else. I just bided my time, an' when my chance came I lepped at it. Did you mark the way I headed her off with the first turn of the wheel till I got her sideways on, an' then gave her forty miles an hour in the ribs? You thought I was goin' into the railin's, didn't you?"

"I thought you were goin' a deal farther," sez I, "an' takin' me with you."

"Tut," sez he; "you should know me better than that. I could drive that car round the edge of half a crown. I've been loafin' about the roads these two days with her, just waitin' my chance at the goat. Aha, ye ould divil ye," sez he, hittin' the carcass a kick, "you didn't know the man you had to deal with. Away in to Father Connolly for that gun, Pat. Wait," sez he, takin' a skip, "begad I have a great notion. Don't say a word to Father John till my weddin'-eve. Come down that night an' take in the news to him for me. He'll be thinkin' he has got the better of me, an' it'll be all the greater come-down to him. I'm not spiteful, mind you, Pat; but I did not like what he said about that snipe. Don't forget, now; say about seven o'clock."

So down I went to Mr. Anthony's the night before his weddin'; an' here he had

a very nice wee supper set in the dinin' room. He was standin' on a chair hammerin' a nail in the wall.

"Away in to Father John," sez he, "an' tell him the whole story, an' fetch back the gun. He's comin' to supper at half-past seven, an' I want to have it up on the wall here just below the picture he isn't goin' to get. Hurry now; I'm on eggs till I get that gun in my hands. It'll be a terrible come-down to the old man," sez he, "but he asked for it. He should have known better than back himself against *me*."

But the old man wasn't a bit put about. "Sure I saw the whole thing from my bed-room window," sez he. "If I hadn't rapped in a quick prayer between the two curlikews he took on the road it's in Purgatory the pair of you would be this minit. Take him his gun," sez he. "I hope he does no harm with it. But that was an unlucky beast; an' I wouldn't be too sure. Anyway, Pat, whoever he shoots, take care an' let it not be you. Tell him I'll be in presently."

When I entered Mr. Anthony's hall he took a race at me with his hands out.

"Hooh!" sez he. "Give me it." An' with that the two feet flew from him an' down he went like a sack of coals through a man-hole. When I picked him up he let a shout out of him.

"My arm, Pat! My arm! I believe it's broke."

"I do believe it is," sez I, feelin' it very gingerly.

"Fetch me in an' lay me on the dinin'-room sofa," sez he, groanin'. So I did that.

"Lie there, Mr. Anthony," sez I, 'till I run for the doctor."

"Aye, do, Pat," sez he, in a half-whisper. "An' then you'll have to bring word to the Livingstons. There'll be no weddin' to-morrow, now. This is a six weeks' job at the very least. But before you go unhook that picture an' fetch it an' the gun in to Father Connolly's."

"But why, Mr. Anthony?" sez I, gapin' at him. "Sure the goat had nothin' to do with this."

"She had everythin' to do with it," sez he, sittin' up a bit an' raisin' his voice. "Confound her, she's immortal. The ghost of her is buttin' old Nick round the lower regions this very minit, I'll take my oath. I had her skin dressed an' laid on the hall floor, thinkin' generations of the Anthonys would wipe their feet on the misbegotten brute; an' it was that I slipped on. Maybe I overdid it, Pat," sez he, leanin' back again an' closin' his eyes. "I had my victory over her, an' I wanted to rub it in; an' now she has bested me in the end. Father John was right. I should have showed more Christianity towards the poor animal. I shouldn't have hit her with the car. Tell him I said that. He's a good old man. An', Pat"—he hesitated a minit or two—— "Yes, do," sez he. "I'd better make a clean breast of it and not bring ill-luck on all the young Anthonys to come. Tell him I *did* shoot that snipe by mistake. I was aimin' at a water-hen."

BETTY BALFOUR

A Personal "Close-up" of Britain's Favourite Film Star

BY
FENN SHERIE

WHEN a reporter from a leading London daily newspaper rushed in to Miss Betty Balfour recently and informed her that, as the result of a competition, she had been voted easily the most popular of all British film actresses, she sat bolt upright, with a little startled look in her eyes, and exclaimed, "Good heavens! Now I shall have to live up to it!"

Which, of course, is just the sort of thing Betty Balfour would say. Indeed, that spontaneous remark was characteristic not only of the real Betty as her friends know her, but also of the little shadow-person upon whom the cinema public has so wholeheartedly bestowed its affections. "Tiptoes," the little chorus girl who won her way to fame in the film-story, "Love, Life, and Laughter," would almost certainly have made a similar ejaculation in like circumstances, whilst even "Squibs," the Cockney flower-girl, or "Mord Em'ly," the little maid from the slums, would have expressed the same thought—though probably in some less refined phrase such as "Blimey! That's done it!" To meet Betty Balfour in the flesh is to discover that every character she portrays upon the screen is imbued with her own delightful personality.

It is not difficult, therefore, to convey to her admirers exactly what kind of a person this little fair-haired, blue-eyed slip of a girl really is. To put it very simply, there is "no nonsense" about her. Both in

At the age of six.

petty whims. Full of human sympathy and bubbling over with good humour, she is—in the words of one of the studio electricians—"one of those people you can talk to." Beyond this our eulogies must cease, for Betty Balfour hates flattery almost as much as she hates the sight of her own face on the screen.

This may appear to be an extravagant statement, but it is perfectly true. Whilst nothing pleases her more than genuine appreciation of her work—say in the form of letters from her admirers all over the world (which, by the way, already average about five thousand annually)—she is at the same time so extremely conscientious that whenever she views one of her own films she can think of nothing else but "how much better it might have been." That is probably the secret of her ever-increasing success—she is not rendered stagnant by self-satisfaction.

Betty—one instinctively drops the surname as a mark of affection, and not of disrespect—is one of those rare creatures—a former "infant prodigy" who, though no longer an infant, remains a prodigy. Her talent and beauty were childhood's gifts, but, instead of fading with the approach of womanhood, they have steadily developed. Now, at the age of twenty-two, enhanced perhaps by a little spark of devilment, by a keen sense of humour, and, above all, by a tremendous capacity for real hard work, they have brought her to a position of world-wide popularity. And when it is added that she remains utterly unspoiled and intensely ambitious it will be realized that the possibilities for her future are almost unlimited.

At the age of twelve, when she made her first professional appearance.

At the age of two she was adopted by an uncle and aunt, Colonel and Mrs. Wood, who encouraged and developed her natural talents in every way. To this day "Auntie"—a generous, broad-minded, good-natured soul—remains her dearest companion.

"As a child she was a perfect little demon," Mrs. Wood told me, with a sly glance at her niece. "If ever we took her to a theatre or a music-hall, she would always insist upon giving us a reproduction of items from the performance as soon as we got home. One evening when we had company she astonished us all by giving an

At the age of fifteen. Singing "Le Rêve Passe" in the revue "Airs and Graces." 1917.

imitation of the late Marie Lloyd, and, to our discomfort, the song she selected for the impersonation was "Don't you think my dress is just a little bit—just a little bit—not too much of it?"

"Oh, but I was good sometimes," protested Betty, with an appealing glance in my direction. "There were days when I was as quiet as a mouse. I remember that in one of the spare bedrooms there was a little recess curtained off as a sort of lumber store, and this I furnished as my secret hiding-place. I took blankets and books and chocolates and all sorts of things in there, and I would sometimes remain hidden for hours upon end—doing nothing else but thinking. I remember that my principal day-dream was based upon a vague hope that I might some day be turned into a kestrel, so that I could spread my wings and fly out to sea."

"Yet," interjected Auntie, "despite all her childish dreams, she hated to be treated as a child. I remember on the first occasion I ever saw her—before she was three years old—a supercilious youth of eighteen called out to her over the tea-table, 'Pip, pip, Baby.' She promptly retorted, 'Rats to you!'"

I suggested that, although her talents were perfectly natural, Miss Balfour must have had some lessons in her art.

"Well," said Mrs. Wood, "as a matter of fact we had her taught dancing because she used to fall over her feet when she walked! When she first went to the dancing class she was bitterly disappointed because they would not let her perform the famous dance of Salome before she had learned some of the more elementary steps. At elocution classes, too, she was always chosen to recite the most dainty fairy-like poems, but at home she always preferred to give something a little more dramatic, such as the speeches of Lady Macbeth.

Although as a child she was much in demand for "At Homes," Betty's first public appearance was not made until she was nearly twelve years of age. This was on the occasion of a charity concert before an audience of five hundred children, when she deputized for two artistes who had failed to appear, giving over an hour's performance, which included mimicry, recitations, singing, dancing, and, to every body's surprise, concluded with an impromptu speech!

From this arose other engagements for charity, at one of which she was seen by a leading revue producer, who, hearing her recite a little French poem that had been taught her by her native governess, and being impressed by the purity of her accent, offered her the part of a little refugee girl from Louvain. As a point of interest it may be mentioned that she was actually the first actress to step on to the stage in a revue under the auspices of Mr. Charles Cochran. Her success in this part was so marked that a certain producer, believing the statement that she was only twelve years of age to be a showman's "dodge," offered her Doris Keane's part in "Romance," which, of course, she declined with thanks.

In the character of "Sally"—her first film part.

It was about this time that Sir James Barrie came up to her in the wings one day and said, "Do you know you are my ideal Wendy?" It was also in 1914 that Mr. Welsh, of the Welsh-Pearson Film Company, first saw her, although the outbreak of the war prevented him from engaging her at the time. It was in a revue called "Airs and Graces" in 1917 that she made her first individual hit. To fill a gap between two big scenes she was sent before a front cloth all by herself. Dressed as a French *poilu* she sang with wonderful dramatic intensity and fervour the stirring war-song, "Le Rêve Passe," and although her name did not even appear on the programme the public and the critics were wildly enthusiastic at the remarkable performance of this fifteen-year-old wonder. Yet, thanks to the careful guidance of her devoted guardian and her own simple common sense, the success never turned her head.

Meanwhile Mr. Welsh had not forgotten her, and at the end of her revue engagements he endeavoured to get into touch with her. He advertised in several theatrical papers, but to his surprise received no reply, and it seemed as though she had suddenly disappeared.

What had really happened, however, was that she had been the victim of an air raid—a bomb having dropped within twenty yards from the flat in Maida Vale where she

As "Squibs," the flower-girl. "Telling father off" for corrupt practices in connection with her young man's candidature.

was staying, hurling her out of bed and dashing her against the fireplace. She managed to get downstairs to attend to her aunt and uncle, one of whom had been blown from her room into the corridor, whilst the other was also severely shaken. It was not until the following morning that Betty discovered that she had broken two ribs and had also lost her voice, which was not restored to her for several months.

Nearly a year later, however, she was able to resume work, first with the revived "Follies" under Dan Everard, and later in "Medora," where Mr. Welsh at last succeeded in running her to earth. Thenceforward she devoted her attentions entirely to film work, and her past successes, now almost forgotten by the majority, paled into insignificance in the light of her new triumphs.

She was now seventeen years of age when she was offered the part of "Sally"—a slovenly little domestic servant—in a picture called "Nothing Else Matters."

"Squibs" becomes an M.P. For this scene an exact replica of the House of Commons' interior was built in the studio, and one or two genuine M.P.'s took part. The gentleman in the grey suit is Sir Will'am Bull.

As "Tiptoes," the little slum girl who dreamed that some day she would become a star. A scene from "Love, Life, and Laughter."

"After a few days' work in the studio," Mr. George Pearson, her producer, told me, "we began to realize that, as a film actress, she had tremendous possibilities. In

Another scene from "Love, Life, and Laughter." "Tiptoes," now a famous star, re-visits the garret of former days.

A graceful figure in a picturesque setting. According to her producer, Betty Balfour's moods are greatly affected by her environment.

the part for which she was cast she had to make up to appear ugly and slovenly, which she did without hesitation. I noticed, however, that as soon as she smiled her face became transfigured, and all her ugliness disappeared. So, at the close of the story, when the two lovers were embracing, I introduced a 'close-up' of Sally's smile. When shown subsequently at the trade show of the picture, that little portion of the film evoked more applause than anything else, and it is no exaggeration to say that it definitely marked the turning point in her career.

"By the way," Mr. Pearson added, "Betty's irrepressible sense of humour is a great joy to her producer, her fellow-actors, and, indeed, the whole staff. When she is present in the studio there is never a dull moment. I remember upon one occasion she was required to fall down a flight of stairs. In rehearsing the scene she found that the bumping on the stairs prevented her from gliding smoothly from top to bottom, so we arranged that the lid of a packing-case should be concealed beneath her skirt to act as a sort of toboggan.

"Betty executed the fall perfectly, and when she arrived at the bottom her facial expression was too funny for words. As soon as I noticed it, I called out 'Hold that, Betty—we'll take a close-up!' Her reply was, 'All right, but for goodness' sake be quick; there's a nail sticking into me!'"

Betty's own impressions of her initiation into the art of the cinema are equally interesting.

"When I first went to the studio I had an idea that film acting would be great fun," she told me. "I soon discovered that it was very much harder and infinitely more exacting than stage work. Encouraged by kindly words from Mr. Pearson, I struggled through the part of 'Sally' fairly well. But—oh!—when I saw myself on the screen at the trade show! I was in such a state of nerves that every time the audience laughed I honestly believed that

they were jeering. Even their applause I mistook for irony, and I made up my mind that I would never step before the camera again. When it was all over I dashed out of the theatre, went straight home, and shed bitter tears of disappointment. You can imagine my surprise when, on the following day, Mr. Welsh rang me up to congratulate me upon my success, made me promise never to act for any other company, and added that he was sending on a cheque for an extra hundred pounds to encourage me in my efforts!"

Then followed other films in which Betty Balfour was starred, the "Squibs" series being particularly popular. The exploits of the little Cockney flower-girl gave her wonderful opportunities for broad boisterous humour, of which she was not slow to take advantage. "I have a tremendous admiration for the Cockney folk," she told me. "They are so good-natured, so witty, and so thoroughly self-reliant."

An amusing incident occurred during the taking of "Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep." The scene was in Piccadilly Circus. Squibs was seated amongst the other flower-sellers round the fountain, when she was supposed to be informed by a number of newspaper reporters that she had won the famous sweepstake—whereupon she had to throw one of the men's hats into the air, dash across the road through the traffic, kiss a policeman on point duty, and hurry off home to break the news to her friends.

"As the scene was filmed on the actual location," said Betty, "we were unable to rehearse it before taking, and, of course, we could not introduce a make-believe policeman in place of the regular constable on duty. So Mr. Pearson went up to the 'bobby,' explained that we were making a film, and that when I walked up to him and asked him the way to Jermyn Street, all that he was asked to do was to point the way. He concurred quite affably—though had he known of our real intentions he would probably have been rather angry! As it was, as soon as I got the signal that the camera-men were turning, I dashed across the road and said, 'Hullo, constable!' 'Hullo, miss!' he replied; then, before he had time to realize what was happening I had flung my arms

"Oh, boy, where are you now?"—a touching little episode which, though it appears on the screen for less than a minute, occupied more than five hours of patient effort in the filming.

round his neck and given him two whopping big kisses. It took him a few seconds to recover his composure, and all he could ejaculate was, ' 'Ere—'ere, I say . . .'—by which time I had jumped into a car with Mr. Pearson and driven off, leaving Robert to be mercilessly chaffed by two taxi-men. The result when shown on the screen was simply perfect—but I do hope he has forgiven me for my impertinence!

" By the way, it is remarkable how many people seem to believe that ' Squibs ' is a real live character. After the release of the film I have just mentioned, for example, I received dozens of letters congratulating me upon winning the Calcutta Sweep, many of them asking for money ' on the strength of it.' Again, at a suburban cinema which I visited *incognita* not long ago I heard two dear old charladies discussing me.

" ' Well, that Betty Balfour ain't 'arf a nib,' said one. ' Fancy startin' in the Walworth Road and then winnin' all that money and becomin' an M.P.! And now she's married a copper and settled down—so I reckon that's just about finished her.'

" So many people have been disappointed at the announcement that we are not going to make any more ' Squibs ' pictures that they may like to know the reason. It is simply that I do not wish to become 'stale.' If I were to confine myself to one character only, I am sure that more or less 'machine-made' pictures would eventually result.

" Mention of ' Squibs, M.P.' reminds me that there is a queer little coincidence associated with this film. At the first public presentation, in the Stoll Picture Theatre (formerly the London Opera House), I was accompanied by Mrs. Hilton Philipson, M.P., who, as Mabel Russell, originated the character of 'Squibs' on the stage. The film scenario of ' Squibs, M.P.' was written long before Mrs. Philipson was elected, yet it contains a remarkable parallel. You see, 'Squibs' was put up for election because the former candidate, her lover, was disqualified on account of some irregularity on the part of one of his agents. Strangely enough, Mrs. Hilton Philipson's election arose through a similar irregularity committed by one of her husband's agents! To add another link to the chain of coincidence, Mr. Philipson informed me that it was on the stage of the London Opera House that he first saw the charming lady who afterwards became his bride."

I ventured the remark that her work must bring her into contact with many interesting types.

In "Squibs' Honeymoon." The little flower-girl dons her old hat and shawl for the last time.

A scene from the new film "Réveillé," in which Betty Balfour appears as a war-time "flapper."

" Very," was the reply. ' Last week, for instance, we were doing a scene in a market-place, and the whole day long I had to play opposite a codfish. When he arrived at the studio he was nice and fresh, but as the hours passed and the atmosphere thickened he became rather unpleasant. By the end of the day we were not on speaking terms, and a tragic climax was only just averted by the production of liquid 'refreshment'—disinfectant for him and eau-de-Cologne for me.

" It's a funny business. Sometimes the filming of a scene will go perfectly smoothly at the first attempt, whilst upon another occasion everything seems to go wrong. For instance, there was a pathetic little scene in ' Love, Life, and Laughter,' in which I was supposed to be gazing out of the window dreaming of the lover of my girlhood days and murmuring sadly to myself, ' Oh, boy, where are you now ? '

" When Mr. Pearson announced that we had just this one short scene to take to complete the day's work, it was half-past five in the afternoon. But, oh ! what a bother we had ! The moon jumped about all over the place, the lights flickered, a draught blew the curtains across my face, and all sorts of calamities occurred one after the other. When it was finally filmed to his liking it was just on eleven o'clock !

" Few people realize how many times some of the scenes have to be taken before a satisfactory result is achieved. Perhaps it is as well. Nevertheless, it is rather amusing, after returning from a strenuous day in the country and having succeeded in transferring one short scene to just two or three hundred feet of celluloid, to be met by a dear old lady—as I was recently—and asked, ' Well, dear, and how many of those lovely film plays have you made to-day ? ' Talking of old ladies reminds me that when we were filming ' Wee MacGregor's Sweetheart ' in a small Highland village we persuaded the oldest inhabitant—a dame of about ninety—to appear before the camera in the course of the play. It was only a few minutes' work, she was well paid for it, and she accepted the money with evident delight. But, as she waddled away, we heard her mutter to herself, ' Aweel—it's a mean way of earnin' a living.' "

To watch Betty relating an amusing anecdote is in itself a delight. Her mobile features, her vivacious gestures, and her natural bent for mimicry are all brought into play as she speaks. In serious mood she is equally interesting. Ask her to talk about the future of the film, and her face immediately lights up with an expression of intense and earnest enthusiasm. She contends that the cinema is a tremendous power for good, that it reaches a public infinitely more vast than any stage play can ever do, and that is why she has forsaken the stage for the film. It is her sincere belief that she has a mission in life to bring sunshine and happiness into the lives of those who find existence a little drab, and to convey to those in our Colonies, and, indeed, in all parts of the world, an impression of British life and British ideals. In proof of her sincerity it may be added that, although she has received several tempting offers to go to California, she has politely but firmly turned them down.

Her patriotism, as well as her versatility, is given full play in her latest film, " Réveillé "—a story of the war and the aftermath—which ranges from the broadest comedy to the most poignant tragedy, and is inspired with many touches of true genius.

It is, perhaps, her absolute sincerity in everything she undertakes, revealing itself in the characters she portrays, that has made her so popular with members of her own sex. Whilst remaining essentially feminine, she is not in the least " fluffy." Men pay her the homage of respect and affection not merely because she is a woman, but because she is—well, " just Betty." Thus she has established for herself, all unconsciously, a personality that is devoid of all the superficialities of convention and pretence, in which all her admirers recognize the embodiment of their ideals of the happy freedom of modern girlhood.

A SENSE OF THE FUTURE

BY

MARTIN SWAYNE

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT R.I.

GEORGE BALLANCE was a financier with a sense of the future.

He was also purely English.

He was a tall, lean man, clean-shaven, with a half-humorous and half-sardonic expression, and a roguish, boyish blue eye. He looked on life not from the point of view of one who is immediately interested in what goes on, but as one who wishes only to discover what things are leading to. This attitude gives an effect of detachment which is enigmatical, especially if, as in Ballance's case, it is accompanied by a very shrewd knowledge of affairs.

I encountered him in the lounge of the Blitz Hotel one evening. We were both waiting for friends with whom we were to dine. I discovered him sitting behind a palm tree, eyeing the crowd of well-dressed folk who were passing into the dining-room. It was some time since I had seen him.

"What are you up to nowadays?" I asked, taking a seat beside him. "I've heard nothing of your exploits recently."

"I'm buying horses," he said, with a peculiar light in his eye.

"Horses!" I exclaimed. "Do you expect another war, or what?"

"No, I don't expect another war. The war-chests are too empty still. We sha'n't have another war for some time."

"Then why are you buying horses?"

"I'm buying horses because I like them." He crooked his fingers round the fine gold chain that suspended his eyeglasses, and smiled at me in his peering, short-sighted way. "They're nice animals. I feel I can't possess enough of 'em. I'm buying

them everywhere. I've got agents working for me in Asia Minor, in America, in Australia, and in Africa. Think what a useful animal the horse is. It's got four legs."

"That's true," I replied.

"And nice strong muscles."

"Yes."

"It's a patient animal, too."

"Quite. Still, they eat a lot."

"There's plenty of grass and oats and bran. There is always plenty of that. I don't worry about what comes from the surface of the earth, Millington."

"What do you worry about?"

"I worry about what comes from below the surface. Now, horses aren't interested in what comes from below the surface of the earth. No animal is. That shows their good sense. They're only interested in what's on the surface. So am I."

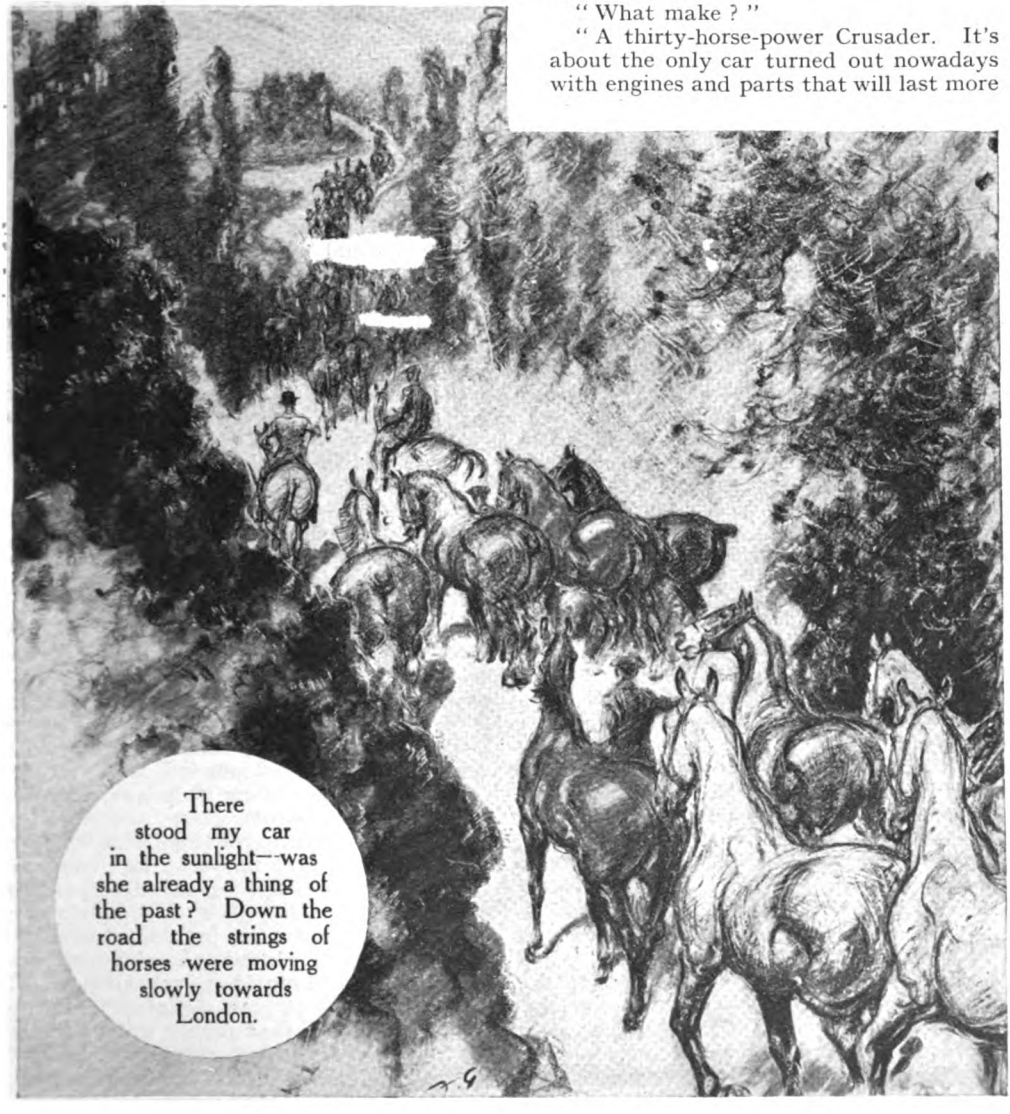
I was still quite in the dark, and told him so.

"If I were to tell you why I'm buying horses, you wouldn't believe me. Nobody would." He tinkled his glasses against the gold ring that he wore on the little finger of his left hand, and his eyes looked sardonically upon the crowd of diners who passed up the steps towards the glass doors of the huge dining-room. "Nobody ever believes in what happens. That's why it happens. Why don't you buy some horses?"

"I really don't need any. I've just got another car."

"What make?"

"A thirty-horse-power Crusader. It's about the only car turned out nowadays with engines and parts that will last more



There stood my car in the sunlight—was she already a thing of the past? Down the road the strings of horses were moving slowly towards London.

than a couple of years. She's a fine engineering proposition, Ballance. It's a treat to drive her."

"I'd rather have thirty horses," he said.

"What on earth would be the good of having thirty horses?" I exclaimed, vexed that he did not share the enthusiasm I felt for my new Crusader. "If you used the whole thirty together you wouldn't be able to go faster than one of them could go. My car can average thirty-five in a long trip comfortably. A horse—no!"

"The horse has definite limitations."

"It certainly has."

He nodded.

"The more I think about limitations, the more sense I see in them. If you had thirty horses under the bonnet of your car, you could feed 'em on grass and oats. But you've got a lot of machinery instead. What do you have to feed it on?"

"Petrol, of course."

"Yes. Petrol, of course. You never saw petrol growing in a field, did you? There isn't a petrol shrub or a petrol flower. You can't sow petrol. If you could, I wouldn't buy horses, even if they had six legs apiece and muscles as big as bolsters. Petrol comes from beneath the surface of the earth. Everything that is a damned nuisance comes from there. Diamonds, for instance."

I was silent.

"How much does your car do on a gallon of petrol?"

"About twenty miles."

"Twenty miles with a gallon of petrol. Where's the petrol gone when you've gone twenty miles? There's no manure in petrol vapour. It doesn't go back to the earth. No, it's gone for ever, and you have to get another gallon out of the earth. Now with the horse it's different."

"Are you going to try and re-introduce the horse into Western civilization?"

"I'm not going to try. I'm going to be the man who owns the horses when Western civilization goes to the earth for another gallon of petrol and finds there ain't any left."

At that moment he rose and left me with a nod. A party of men and women had just come in and he went to greet them. My own friends arrived a little later. During dinner I mentioned that Ballance was buying horses all over the world.

"What for?" they asked.

"I don't know. As far as I can make out he believes that petrol will give out."

There was a chorus of laughter at the absurdity of the idea.

"Why, petrol came down twopence only last week, because they struck new oil four months ago in Mexico," said one.

II.

BALLANCE is a strangely impressive man. He has the power of being impressive without intending to be. I could not shake off the memory of his words. We went to a music-hall after dinner, and everything was merry enough. There was plenty of laughter, of colour and noise, of jokes and bright eyes and pretty dresses. I possessed my new Crusader. My bank balance was satisfactory. I felt in good health. There had been no cloud on my horizon until my conversation with Ballance that evening. And the cloud that now hung there had no proper reason to exist. I did not believe Ballance, and in any case what concern was it of mine if petrol did fail in the far future? Yet in the midst of laughter I constantly found myself staring at the cloud, which I could not get rid of.

If I had known Ballance merely as a dismal prophet, I would have paid no attention to him, and his words would have had no effect on me. But he was not in any sense a dismal prophet. He was a remarkably shrewd man, whose calculations, though simple enough, were usually right. He was very wealthy. He had made his money, as far as I could make out from what I had heard, by foreseeing a few very simple and plain events—plain enough, that is, after they had taken place. But the spectacle of his agents throughout the world silently getting a controlling interest in horses, while he sat, with his half-humorous, half-sardonic expression, in London, amidst all the evidences of the increasing popularity of motoring, with petrol coming steadily down in price and machinery getting cheaper, and mass production on the increase and facilities for easy purchase alluring the most impecunious inhabitant of flatland and villadom to possess a car—this spectacle seemed so paradoxical and absurd that I could not understand why it gained such a hold on my imagination. It was, perhaps, the absurdity of it that made my imagination play round it that night while I lay in bed unable to sleep.

Next morning I took out my new Crusader and went for a fine spin into the country. Its glittering aluminium body was beautiful to behold. I felt that she was a living goddess obedient to my desire. What a marvellous thing a car is! Is there any piece of mechanism so beautifully organized and so easy to handle? I stopped in a village a hundred miles from London to fill up with petrol. A red-painted pump was fixed in the road outside a cycle shop, and I drew up beside it. As the man filled my tank I reflected that nearly every village in Great Britain had these pumps. Everywhere, in all directions, in town or country,

petrol was systematically supplied. Everywhere, going in every direction, north, east, south, and west, were motor-cars of every description. Millions of explosions in millions of cylinders, millions of pistons dashing up and down, millions of gallons of petrol gurgling into tanks, millions of tyred wheels turning—all the world over. What a tremendous activity! What a tremendous giant organism it all was! How impossible to conceive that it should ever die and fall away into nothing because there was no more petrol to course through its arteries! How could that be possible when all the machinery of its vast body was standing, all the enamelled cars with their ingenious engines, and the factories behind them continually turning out new ones? Motors had come to stay. They would never disappear. What, as one of my guests had said the evening before, did people do in the days when there were no motors?

I turned my Crusader towards London, pushed down the accelerator and ate up the miles, and five gallons of petrol as well.

III.

IT occurred to me that evening that I would ring up Ballance and ask him to dine with me. I did not expect that he would accept my invitation. He was a great man, simple enough in his habits, but nevertheless a great man. I was agreeably surprised to hear his manservant reply on the telephone that Sir George would be pleased if I would come and dine with him instead at eight. After I had dressed I found I had half an hour to spare, so I decided to walk to Ballance's house, which was across St. James's Park. As I strolled along Piccadilly, the great roar of London traffic filled the air. The streets seemed to contain an endless band of moving cars and buses. I tried to cast back my mind to the days before motors were common, but my recollection was dim and I could not construct the picture clearly. This great mass of traffic, these thundering and swaying buses, the continual pulsation of engines, that began in the early morning and continued until far into the night—for it only ceased, or almost ceased, for a brief space every twenty-four hours—had become a part of daily existence, and to think myself out of it, back into the days of horse traffic, was not possible. As well might I try to think myself into a London before gas was introduced and before water-pipes had been laid, or when the grass grew in the fields round Mayfair.

Ballance had a genial, hospitable vein in him. We dined in a small room in his big house, and were waited upon by a single servant. After dinner I asked if the subject of conversation of the previous evening was permissible, as I wanted to ask some questions.

"You ask any questions you like," he said. "I always tell people anything I know."

"Isn't that rather risky for a financier?"

"Not in my case. It may be for some. When you make money out of the general tendency of things, as I do, and not out of artificial situations, as most others do, there is no risk."

"Why do you think petrol is going to fail?"

He screwed up his eyes and looked towards the ceiling as if he were listening for an answer. Then he lowered his head and carefully moved his wineglass farther away from his plate.

"I don't exactly think," he said. "Have you ever noticed that it is quite true that troubles never come singly?"

"I have noticed that," I replied, eagerly. "It took me years to notice it, but it is quite true. They come in waves."

"You knew the saying long before you realized it?"

"Yes."

"When you realized it, in fact, you probably thought you had made a remarkable discovery, until you happened to remember the proverb that you had used yourself a hundred times without realizing what it meant?"

I nodded. He nodded also and moved his wineglass back.

"That is how things go," he said. "You live to discover only a small fraction of what you say every day in familiar phrases. Now I began to realize for myself that Nature increases to excess what she is just going to take away. I thought I had made a discovery. I struggled with the dim idea and tried to pin it down, when I suddenly found it lying pat before me in a book that I happened to pick up. It is an ancient Chinese proverb. There it was, in those words. Nature increases to excess what she is just going to take away. I understood it at once. You may have read it yourself. But I bet you haven't discovered it. You can read all the wisdom of the world in a week or a day, or perhaps an hour. But you can't understand a millionth part of it unless you have lived it into realization."

"Then you thought that petrol would give out because there is so much motoring?"

"I knew that something must give way, and I wondered what. So I began to make inquiries—very careful ones, too, I assure you. I went into oil and the distribution of oil and the life of oil-bearing regions.

After I had finished these inquiries I began to buy horses."

"So you believe that motoring is doomed?"

"Doomed? Why use such a word? It will die out. And not only motoring, but machinery in general. It is finished."

"But not for hundreds of years."

"Oh, some men live a kind of existence for fifty years after they are finished. But if I thought the age of motoring would last for hundreds of years yet, I wouldn't buy horses." He pointed a finger at me. "See here," he continued, "the end of motoring will be very quick. If you knew as much as I do about oil and had my sense of what's coming you would understand why. I'll put it in this way. This earth we live on isn't any darned old thing. It isn't blind, senseless, helpless, without any affairs of its own. It's alive and cute, but because it's built on another scale it seems a bit slow in the uptake."

"That's only a fanciful idea."

"Is it?" He snorted. "Two fleas on your skin might say the same to one another about your body. But let them nip far enough and long enough and they'll be surprised at what happens to them." He grinned. "How is the new Crusader?"

"She's not short of petrol yet."

He circled his hand round in the air and pursed up his lips, giving me a sly look.

"She won't be just yet."

"How long will it be until she is?"

"It might be a year."

"Well, that's some relief to hear. We've got another year!"

"A year's a long time, isn't it? About the time it takes for the earth to turn round and scratch. Have some more wine. There'll always be enough wine, Millington. There's no harm in wine. It's from the surface of the earth."

IV.

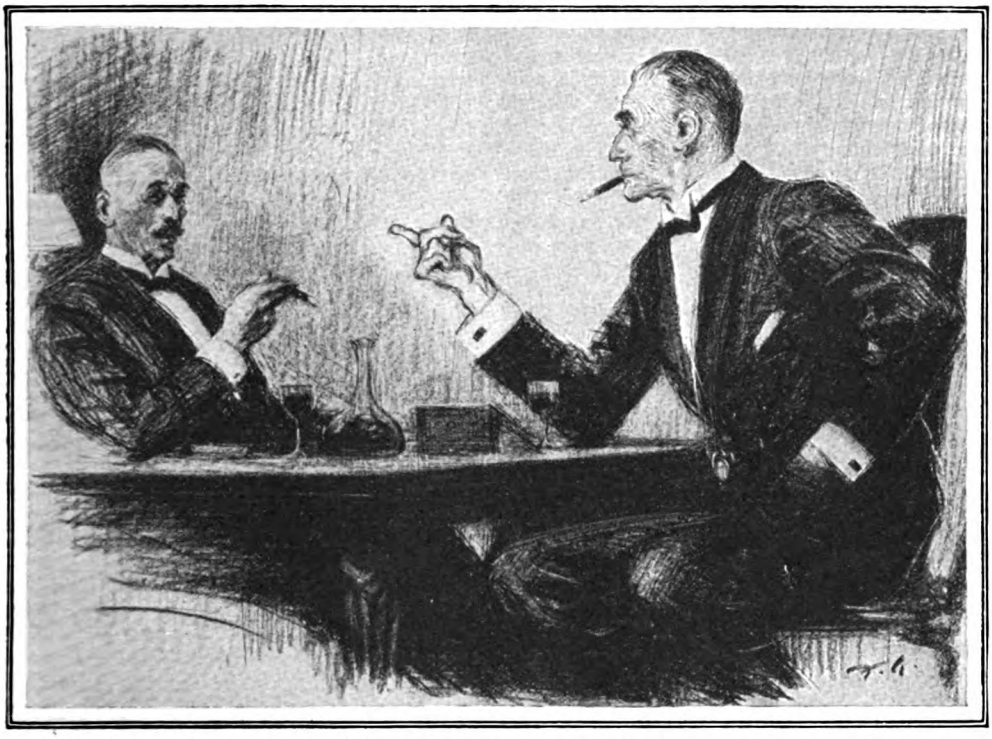
IT is remarkable how soon we forget things. We forget even our grandest moments of insight and our most inspiring ideas. A couple of months after dining with Ballance—he had gone abroad in the meanwhile—I had almost forgotten what we had spoken about, forgotten the train of imagination I had had, forgotten almost that petrol came out of the earth. The Crusader was still, of course, the delight of my soul, but I had seen another make of car that was certainly very good. In fact, I had had a run in this other car and she seemed to go quite divinely. But, as I had said to the agent of the firm, I was perfectly satisfied with my Crusader—which was built, it will be remembered, to last for years—and could not think of changing her, although, of course, there was no doubt that she was inclined to—but this is not the place to describe her defects.

In the meanwhile petrol, after touching the lowest price on record, had begun to climb again. There was a good deal of outcry at this, and I was one amongst the many who penned indignant letters to the papers with my head filled with visions of fleshy oil kings, with long cigars stuck between yellow teeth, manipulating the market after twenty-course dinners, with chorus-girls dancing down the centre of the table. Anything that touches the pocket certainly does rouse violent fancies. Petrol, however, continued to rise in spite of my letter. I had dined with Ballance in the early autumn. By the spring petrol was three shillings, and almost at once it jumped to three-and-sixpence a gallon.

In my own case I could afford to buy it at this price, but it was vexatious and damped the pleasure of motoring considerably. To fill up my eight-gallon tank and have to pay almost thirty shillings for it was irritating. How that yellow-toothed oil king hovered in my mind! Petrol rose relentlessly to four shillings. There was now a universal clamour, and questions were asked in the House of Commons. Everyone suspected that somebody was juggling. It was pointed out that an enormous number of people were buying cars on the hire-purchase system, and that they could not afford to use them if petrol was likely to remain at that level. As it was, they did not know whether to forfeit the cars or continue to pay for them, or what to do, and as most of these people could not really afford to have cars at all, whatever the price of petrol, they easily became overwrought.

As is always the case in such situations, the announcement that there was an actual shortage of petrol was made so obscurely that nobody grasped it. I, for one, certainly did not grasp it, but remained convinced that somebody was playing the fool with the public. Endless articles appeared on the subject, but none of them referred to the central fact that oil was running dry in all countries.

It was Sir George Ballance who pointed it out. In the course of a published interview, Sir George stated in the simplest words that petrol was obtained from beneath the surface of the earth, and came up in the form of crude oil which had to be refined. The supply of crude oil coming up from the depths of the earth was diminishing rapidly both west and east, hence it had been necessary to raise the price of petrol because it was becoming more and more precious and there *was not enough to go*



"See here," he continued, "the end of motoring will be very quick. If you knew as much as I do about oil you would understand why."

round. This last phrase astonished everyone. It seemed incredible.

The newspapers quoted Ballance's words all the world over. They hailed him as a great authority, a man with extraordinary insight and marvellous penetration. His golden phrase that there was not enough oil to go round enlightened the whole of humanity. The oil kings ceased to be the object of vindictive declamation. People no longer shook their fists at them far into the night in clubland, flatland, and villadom. They were not to blame. Sir George—who was an extraordinary man, of course—had explained the situation in a way that no newspaper and none of the well-known journalists of the day—who are so copious in striking articles which never mean anything—had been able to explain it. There wasn't enough oil to go round. Oil was failing. In a report of a further interview with Sir George, it was stated that he had said that the output of oil was not only rapidly diminishing, but that it would probably entirely cease. This was a most startling assertion. It caused a tremendous sensation. No one had expected it. People had understood, from the report of the first interview with Sir George, that the rise in the price of petrol was not due to the nefarious machinations of the oil kings, but to the fact that there was not enough oil to go round. But the public had not got as far as the realization that oil might cease to exist. The genius of Sir George Ballance was necessary to point that out, and when it did so an extraordinary nervousness swept over the entire Western civilization.

The confidence in Western civilization seemed to be menaced.

V.

THE morning upon which the second interview was published in the newspapers I received a letter from Sir George. It was laconic.

"*Would you like to buy thirty horses?—G. B.*"

I threw it aside and opened my newspaper. I looked first at the price of petrol. It had risen to eight shillings and sixpence a gallon. My eye then caught the heavy type in which the headings of the interview with Ballance were printed.

"NO MORE OIL. EARTH RUNNING DRY. STARTLING THEORY. INTERVIEW WITH SIR GEORGE BALLANCE."

I read every word of that article and laid

down the newspaper. It was impossible. I could not believe it. I recalled the conversation in the lounge of the Blitz Hotel in the autumn of the previous year, but it still seemed fanciful and unlikely, even though petrol was so high. I was ready to accept the view that petrol was high because there was a temporary shortage. I had ceased to blame the oil kings and wish them in the fires of hell. I had decided to use my car—by the way, I had sold my Crusader and bought a Juno, a most wonderful car, as pliant as a willow—only for the week-ends until the price of petrol became easier.

But I could not agree with Ballance in thinking that petrol would cease to exist. The earth might be running dry of oil, but petrol—well, of course, if the earth really was running dry of oil, petrol would cease to exist, and as that was quite unthinkable, it was impossible that the earth was running dry of oil. The earth was an enormous size. Imagine a can of petrol in comparison to the size of the earth! I heartily wished somebody would publish one of those illustrated articles on the subject with the dome of St. Paul's and Mount Everest on it. How many cans of petrol, piled on top of one another, would reach the height of Cleopatra's Needle? What was the daily consumption of petrol in the world? Would the tins reach the top of St. Paul's or the top of Mount Everest? I really scarcely knew if the world used a million or a hundred thousand or ten million gallons of petrol a day.

After breakfast I strolled round to the garage where I kept my new Juno. The manager of the garage, an ex-officer, looked glum.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Matter? Did you see what Sir George Ballance says? No more oil! Earth running dry! That's a nice outlook for me." His eye roved over the rows of shining cars that were congregated under the glass roof of the garage.

"It's all nonsense," I said, warmly. "Ballance doesn't know what the earth contains. Why, since the internal combustion engine was invented we can't have used more than what amounts to a cupful of the total quantity of oil lying in the earth. This shortage is temporary. They'll strike new oil before a week is out."

"But the oil's failing in Baku, in Peru, in Mexico, and all over the place. I've heard of one oil-well failing or one district running dry, but never of the whole lot failing together."

"Bah!" I said; "it's nonsense. Why, if petrol gave out, the whole of civilization would have to change its habits. It's inconceivable."

"Then it seems to me the whole of civilization *will* have to change its habits," he muttered. "I don't like it. It's never happened before in this way. They say petrol will jump to double the price before to-night. We can't get it. There have been five hundred gallons on order for the garage for a week past, and I can't get a drop. They've taken off half the London buses, and are jerking the fares up every hour. Look at all these cars here. A month ago most of them would have been out by this time. Now the owners leave them all the week and take them out on Sunday."

"It doesn't matter to you. They pay rent for them just the same."

"Do you suppose I depend only on the rent paid for garaging them?" he said, angrily. "Petrol, oil, repairs, tyres, cleaning, overhauling—all that brings me in cash. The more a man uses his car, the better pleased I am."

"I shouldn't worry. Nothing will happen."

He looked at me with sombre fiery eyes.

"Were you in the war, Mr. Millington?"

"Yes."

"Didn't that teach you that things you can't imagine *can* happen?" He laughed shortly and turned away. It was only natural that he should be nervy. I went to my new Juno. Her lines were splendid, and on the road she was all she looked.

I left the garage and walked up a side street into Piccadilly. As the manager of the garage had said, they had taken half the London buses off the road. This made a considerable difference to the volume of traffic. There was also a much smaller number of private cars and tradesmen's vans. It was possible to cross the street with ease.

Looking down Piccadilly and seeing the wide gaps in the stream of vehicles gave a faint sense of disaster. The volume of traffic and the great din of its passage had hitherto sung a brazen triumphant song that reassured the Londoner. It was the harsh song of progress in an age which, hurrying with increasing complexities, required a strident loud music to drown its anxieties. It was a visible and audible proof that all was well, that things worked properly, that business was prosperous, that people were going the right way, that money was plentiful, that God was in His heaven, that there was nothing to fear. The streets are all roaring with traffic—all's well with the world! This was the unconscious influence of the traffic, which I only became aware of through its absence. A chill feeling crept over me as I watched the broken and narrowed stream flowing intermittently past me. A newspaper poster caught my eye: "*Earth running dry of oil. Petrol nine shillings.*"

VI.

PETROL was fourteen shillings a gallon next day, and that was an entirely prohibitive price. All the London buses were withdrawn from the streets. All lorries and commercial vehicles ceased running. Only a very few private cars appeared. *The streets of London were almost empty.* People could walk across from pavement to pavement without looking round. They could stand in groups in the middle of Ludgate Circus and discuss the weather, if they wanted to, without danger. The dislocation of trade was incalculable.

Of course, it was rather enjoyable because it was novel, and people got some new sensations, but everyone felt a growing apprehension of disaster in the air. This sudden withdrawal of mechanical power was mysterious. What would happen next? Would coal cease? If coal ceased, machinery could not be kept going, and without machinery where would modern civilization find itself? Factories would close, railways would be unused, tubes would be silent, there would be no electricity, no gas, no oil. Animal or vegetable fat would become the sole illuminant. It would take an hour to get from Hampstead to the City. It would take days to get to Manchester and weeks to reach America. Newspapers would be hand-printed by candle-light. Civilization would be thrown back one hundred, two hundred, a thousand years.

A newspaper poster caught my eye.

We should still have telephones and telegraphs, but no means of swift locomotion. We should know what occurred in Australia or Japan in a few seconds, but what a singular discrepancy there would be between the swiftness of the transmission of news and the slowness of the transmission of our bodies! England would become large again. York would be far distant by coach, and Edinburgh an adventurous expedition. The entire spirit of life would change. A new race would emerge in every Western land, a race of craftsmen who rooted themselves in their native ground. Character and dialect would arise again. The towns would contract. The great combines in business would break up and the movements of centralization, the modern substitution for roots, cease.

But there was no evidence of coal ceasing. That layer of modern civilization and all that belonged to it was not threatened. But the superimposed layer of motor traffic was removed at one stroke.

I had a tank full of petrol in my Juno, so I took her out into the deserted streets. People stared at me. Their looks were almost hostile. It was as if the first days of motoring had returned, when a car was regarded as an invention of the devil, and the drivers of horse-buses vented their wit on it. I felt it was awkward having to sound my horn. People resented it. I went out into the country north of London. I did not see a single car of any kind. The trains were running as usual. I met a string of horses moving towards London, led by a man chewing a straw. He stared at my car. A few miles farther on I met more horses.

I drew up on a lonely heath, where the gorse was flaming. I felt sad. The sense of disaster had gripped me. At last I realized that petrol had perhaps ceased for ever. I walked slowly over the heathland. What did it mean to me? It meant a great deal. A motor-car had become the chief factor of

my life. I was always motoring, motoring here and motoring there, always arranging trips and going to places for the sake of motoring to them. I liked taking people out. I liked lunching in the country, driving out to distant golf courses, driving down to the sea, driving up to Scotland, driving to and fro. I liked my car to be admired. I liked to talk motoring shop. It gave me most of the meaning I found in life. A strange admission, perhaps, but true enough. What would I do without a motor—without speed—without independence ?

There stood my Juno in the sunlight amid the golden gorse, perfectly shaped, faultlessly neat and complete, almost living—and was she already a thing of the past, finished, *dead ?* Down the road the strings of horses were moving slowly towards London.

Well, there was one man who knew what to do at this strange moment, when fate had turned the wheel of progress back with sudden violence. That man was Sir George Ballance. Horses were moving all the world over, and Ballance was the controller of them. He would be busy enough. People would gradually find out that he was the Horse King. Some would recollect that he had said he was buying horses for months past, and they would understand, as I now understood, why he had been doing it. I smiled at myself. At the Blitz Hotel and at his house I could not comprehend him, although he had told me enough. Now it was all quite plain.

I climbed into my Juno and turned her south for our last ride together.

ON coming into London, I happened to turn up the Euston Road, where second-hand motor shops abound. I descended upon one of them and inquired—merely out of curiosity—what they would give me for the car. I was told that they were not buying any more cars. They were quite polite until I said I would take two hundred for her. One of them, a little dark man with a cigarette between his lips, spoke :—

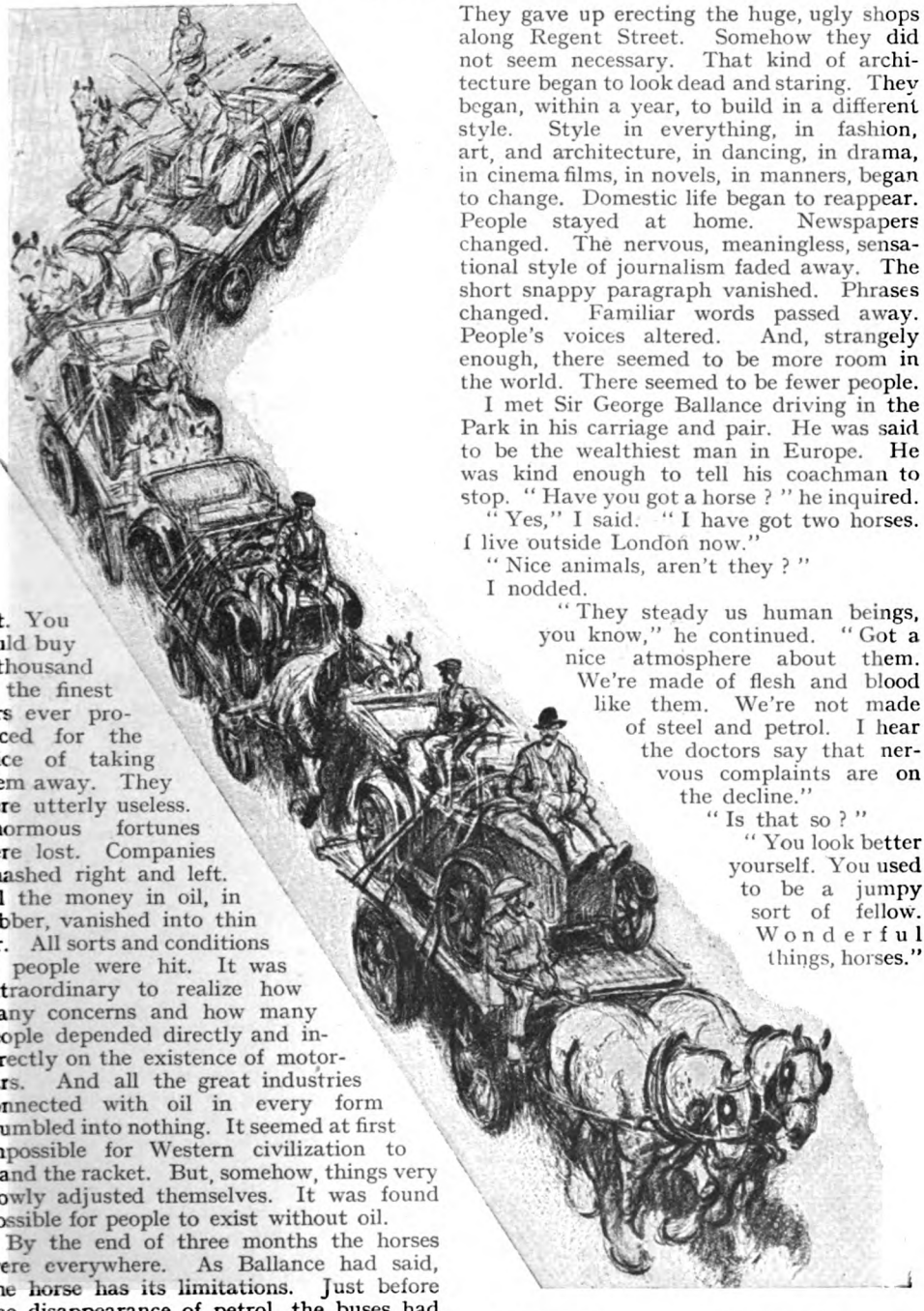
"Take the darned thing away ! What the devil do you think us want with cars ? "

He spoke so violently that I thought it wise to retire. All down the Euston Road and Great Portland Street little groups of men with anxious faces stood at the doors of the motor-showrooms. I drove my Juno into her garage and left her there with half an inch of petrol in her tank. That was the last time I drove her. Petrol was now over a pound a gallon, and rapidly mounting.

No one knew what to do. The feeling of disaster had increased. Civilization seemed menaced. Of course, religious-minded folk saw a warning from Heaven in the situation. I must confess that I did not entirely escape from this notion myself. The sudden cessation of oil was curious. It looked almost as if a supernatural agency was at work. I think most people felt this even if they did not say so. Vast bodies of men were thrown out of employment, but there were no riots. People were touched with a kind of awe. No one, perhaps, had realized before how vulnerable our modern civilization was, and how easily it could be thrown into disorder, and even paralyzed. I may be wrong, but it often seemed to me that with the awe people felt there was a trace of relief. Could it be possible that people were relieved that motor-cars had vanished ? Was it possible that people didn't really believe in modern civilization ? I have often wondered.

The Government tried to deal with the situation. Doles were distributed. It was still hoped that oil would be struck again, and that the former wells would begin to yield. Some scientist tried to account for the cessation of oil by a theory connected with the attractive forces of the moon and planets, and talked of an oil-tide ; others advanced the idea that there had been some deep subterranean displacement which had caused the oil levels to sink beyond reach ; others said it was due to an actual exhaustion. Nobody knew how the situation should be taken. Motor-car makers did not know if they should continue making cars. People who had cars did not know whether they should keep on paying garage fees. The omnibus companies, with their thousands of motor-buses, did not know whether to buy horses or not. A week passed by in this great uncertainty. Tradesmen began to buy horses and order vans. The carriage-builders began to get busy. Garages began to be turned into stables. Very gradually horse traffic began to increase in the streets. A few ancient horse-buses appeared, the drivers wearing top-hats and flicking their whips as of old. Hansom cabs and four-wheelers crept out of odd corners and were snapped up eagerly. A new traffic appeared, slow-moving—incredibly slow-moving it seemed at first—singing another song, and exhaling another odour. The harsh music of the age of progress was softened. New expressions appeared on people's faces. They looked calmer. They were less hurried.

By the end of a month motor-cars were things of the past. They were nowhere to be seen. The volume of horse traffic steadily increased. Horses began to pour into Europe. They poured into England. The former roar in the streets was replaced by a rumble and the clip-clop of hoofs. Processions of horse-drawn lorries bore motor-cars away from garages—where, I know



not. You could buy a thousand of the finest cars ever produced for the price of taking them away. They were utterly useless. Enormous fortunes were lost. Companies smashed right and left. All the money in oil, in rubber, vanished into thin air. All sorts and conditions of people were hit. It was extraordinary to realize how many concerns and how many people depended directly and indirectly on the existence of motor-cars. And all the great industries connected with oil in every form crumbled into nothing. It seemed at first impossible for Western civilization to stand the racket. But, somehow, things very slowly adjusted themselves. It was found possible for people to exist without oil.

By the end of three months the horses were everywhere. As Ballance had said, the horse has its limitations. Just before the disappearance of petrol, the buses had been increased in size.

But when the horses came back the little horse-bus came back too. And aeroplanes disappeared for good, to everyone's relief. What use were they ever? How diminutive the horse-buses looked! All the vehicles looked diminutive, like toys.

They gave up erecting the huge, ugly shops along Regent Street. Somehow they did not seem necessary. That kind of architecture began to look dead and staring. They began, within a year, to build in a different style. Style in everything, in fashion, art, and architecture, in dancing, in drama, in cinema films, in novels, in manners, began to change. Domestic life began to reappear. People stayed at home. Newspapers changed. The nervous, meaningless, sensational style of journalism faded away. The short snappy paragraph vanished. Phrases changed. Familiar words passed away. People's voices altered. And, strangely enough, there seemed to be more room in the world. There seemed to be fewer people.

I met Sir George Ballance driving in the Park in his carriage and pair. He was said to be the wealthiest man in Europe. He was kind enough to tell his coachman to stop. "Have you got a horse?" he inquired.

"Yes," I said. "I have got two horses. I live outside London now."

"Nice animals, aren't they?"

I nodded.

"They steady us human beings, you know," he continued. "Got a nice atmosphere about them. We're made of flesh and blood like them. We're not made of steel and petrol. I hear the doctors say that nervous complaints are on the decline."

"Is that so?"

"You look better yourself. You used to be a jumpy sort of fellow. Wonderful things, horses."

Processions of horse-drawn lorries bore motor-cars away.

QUICK WORK BY PHILIP

YOU CAN DO A LOT OF THINGS IN THREE WEEKS —IN AMERICA!

BY

R.L.LURIE

ILLUSTRATED BY P.B.HICKLING

(*Letter to the Head of the Whitney Department Store at Oriole City from Mr. Philip Ware.*)

January 21, 1924.
ANTLER HOTEL.

MR. GEORGE WHITNEY,
Whitney Department Store,
Oriole City.

Sir: Here is the OPPORTUNITY for which you have waited so long!

A young man with (1) brains
(2) nerve
(3) ability
who lacks (1) money
(2) beauty

is giving you this unusual opportunity to become his EMPLOYER!

He can produce
an Excellent Education
an Optimistic Nature
an Eagerness to Learn.

All that he asks is an INTERVIEW!

Fill in the enclosed form and mail it IMMEDIATELY!

Do it NOW!

To-morrow may be too LATE!

You are under NO obligation to employ him!

Respectfully yours,
PHILIP WARE.

(*Copy of the enclosed form.*)

Place x after line indicating your particular sensation. All replies strictly confidential. Immediate attention given, and no expense attached to you.

MR. PHILIP WARE,
Antler Hotel.

MY DEAR MR. WARE:

(1) Come at once! ( )
(2) With pleasure! ( )
(3) At last! ( )
(4) My hours are — to — ( )

Yours truly,
(Signature)————————

(*Letter to Mr. Ware's parents.*)

YE ABODE ANTLER.

From the future MILLIONAIRE, LITTLE PHIL, To MA and PA and BROTHER BILL: Greetings—Know ye, that I have arriven and am preparing to lay siege at this very moment to a firm most dignified and haughty. I mapped out a letter on the train, and all I can say is that I hope whoever reads it has a sense of humour, or methinks this ambitious lad will search elsewhere.

However, why worry? I know I've got to get a job, and, consequently, I will get one, although there does seem to be a goodly number of boys hanging around doing nothing, but perfectly willing to tell you all about it.

I am living at an old-fashioned place known officially as the Antler Hotel, because Cy Miller, the owner, picked up a thusly decorated sign at some auction sale. However, for a variety of excep-

tionally good reasons, it is more generally known as "Sighs." Mr. Miller is a curious man, with a knack at asking questions. He wears a long beard and he never has to polish his glasses, because he always looks over them. All that he does is to sit round and collect the bills. His daughter, a Mrs. Leonidas Spur, does the cooking; and her husband, the honourable Leonidas himself, performs twice a day as waiter and chief dishwasher. He is very agreeable—agreeing to everything his wife says. His spouse, judging from the two meals I have eaten, is gifted with culinary ability, for the food is really excellent, but not quite so good that a reminder from home, especially those cakes, would not be appreciated.

Well, how are things moving along in Cliftondale? There are about three times the number of people here that there are at home. From what I've seen of it, the Whitney Department Store is a good deal like Lothrops'—but on a larger scale. Whitney's is the place where I hope to get a job. Don't forget to forward the *Record* every week. I want to know all the news. Take care of yourselves. Lots of love,

From PHIL.

(*Extracts from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

JAN. 22nd.

WAITED in the hope that the special delivery letter I enclosed with my note to Mr. Whitney would reach me, but not a sign of it for miles around. So another ultimatum from little Phil must need be written on the morrow. I'm positive that there's room for me in that store, especially higher up. Wrote home and took a walk. Ran into Charlie Little and recognized him almost before I saw him. He certainly did have the sweetest-looking girl with him. She came out of a store later. I couldn't get her name—Marion something or other. Left them and walked through Whitney's. Hope I meet Charlie again, but I'd rather see her alone.

JAN. 23rd.

Wrote and mailed my second instalment to Mr. Whitney and then took a tramp through his store for fresh material. The more I think of the bluff I'm putting over, the more certain I am that I'm due for a fall, but I can't quit now. Hoped to meet Charlie Little, but missed him, I guess. May visit him to-morrow evening. I wonder what that girl's last name was. I always did like Marion as a first name—but why should a girl's last name worry a fellow?

(*Letter to Mr. George Whitney from Mr. Ware.*)

January 23rd, 1924.
ANTLER HOTEL.

MR. GEORGE WHITNEY,
Whitney Department Store,
Oriole City.

SIR: Your Teddy Bear display is
(1) unattractive
(2) useless
(3) wasteful

With some Small Chairs,
some Large Dolls,
some Imagination,
the Story of the Three Little Bears could have been presented!

YOU have the chairs!
YOU have the dolls!
I have the IMAGINATION!
Opportunity seldom knocks TWICE!
This is the SECOND knock!

Respectfully yours,
PHILIP WARE.

(*Extracts from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

JAN. 25th.

THE continued silence of Mr. Whitney is positively chilling. Absolutely no word. Went into the store to-day, and bought me a necktie, and what do I see but that the chap at the counter has his cravat knotted in the neatest manner I ever gazed upon. Which same furnishes little Phil with a new idea! Still no word from Mr. Whitney. I'm beginning to think that the stamps I enclosed are wasted, but the advance must continue.

((*Telegram delivered to Mr. George Whitney on January 27th*, 1924.)

"Opportunity waiting in your anteroom. "PHILIP WARE."

(*Letter to Mr. Ware's parents.*)

Well, FOLKS: The command for over the top was given, and promptly at zero yours truly started going, and advanced to headquarters of the enemy. At last reports, he was resting victoriously on the field of battle, occupying the strong position of Assistant Shipper in the hitherto invincible firm of George Whitney Company. The strategic value of the position is by no means unimportant, amounting to fifteen dollars a week. Further bulletins will be forwarded as announced.

Love, PHIL.

(*Extracts from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

JAN. 27th.

WELL, old kid, the worst is over and, talking of the nerve, no one ever displayed more pure unadulterated gall this side of the Rubicon for many a year! For history's sake, let me record:—

This morning I rose early and pondered the devious ways of forcing myself upon the head of a large firm, and no sooner having thought than I set forth to do. I telephoned to his office, and having been told that he was busy—would I leave a message, etc., etc., hiked to the nearest telegraph station, dictated a telegram, and ordered the messenger boy to accompany me, which same the curious and inquisitive youth did. We arrived at the lion's lair, and I issued my orders. Whereupon I ran up against one perfectly good secretary who hailed me with the words that "Mr. Whitney sees no one without an appointment!" Nevertheless, I courageously held my own, and clung fast to a chair, waiting impatiently for my reinforcements to arrive. He arrived, bustled in, looked at me, gazed balefully at the ceiling, tapped his head a few times, and was gone. So my message went in. After what seemed three years I was summoned into the Holy of Holies and stood before a tall thin man trying my best not to look foolish.

He sat at his desk, writing away, and then, all of a sudden, swung around, looked me up and down, and then, "Take a seat, Mr. Ware!" he said. But the *way* he said it sort of sent something up my back.

I sat me down.

"UNTIL your letters began to appear, Mr. Ware," he continued, without a smile or a twinkle, "I always believed that there were only seven wonders in the world; but your vivid description of yourself has showed me my mistake. I see, however, that, notwithstanding your numerous gifts, you admit a lack of two essentials—money and beauty!" He turned back to his desk. He was enjoying himself tremendously. I was trying to keep my knees still. He pushed a few papers about and then looked at me once more. "I regret to say," he continued, "that I can furnish you with only one of these missing attributes. If you will report to Mr. Norcross, he will tell you how to earn fifteen dollars every week."

I thanked him the best I could.

"And furthermore, Mr. Ware," he went on, "I shall always be glad to receive these interesting communications from you when you think of any special things you would like to see in the store."

And there you are!

Met Charlie Little at lunch, and he invited me to a theatre party he is giving for a girl to-morrow evening. The more I think of it, the sweeter that name Marion sounds to me.

JAN. 28th.

I feel like writing a poem, but, believe me, there's nothing harder in the English language than to find a rhyme for Marion. All I can think of is "carry on," "tarry on," "marry on" *and* fifteen dollars a week! What Charlie can see in that Sylvia Hartley, the other girl with us, is beyond me. She's very nice and all that, but when Marion is around—well, I'm sitting here, close to three in the morning, busy pining away, and I've only seen her twice!

Honestly, I was too nervous to enjoy the show! I wonder how soon before I can ask for a rise. Her last name is Blaine, really a pretty name,—but of course, when you compare it with Ware! Well, there really *isn't* any comparison! Marion Blaine! Marion Ware! Lord! the second one is simply beautiful!

She certainly has a nice laugh. In fact, everything about her is a bit nicer than nice! It was necessary for me to take her home. Charlie—the nut!—escorted Miss Hartley, who, praise be! evidently lives on the other side of town.

"Do you know, Miss Blaine," I asked, "that I never had a chance to talk to you before? Is there anything about me that you would like to know?"

Methinks she gasped!

"You see," I explained gently, "I can't very well propose to you until you know something about me!"

Consider for a moment, non-existent reader, what you would do if you were a girl, and a young man whom you had only seen twice began his first conversation in the above way.

Marion laughed, albeit a bit nervously, nevertheless she did laugh. Have I remarked that she has a most pleasing laugh?

"Let's compromise, Mr. Ware," she said. "Suppose you tell me something about yourself, and let the—er—proposal go—er—for a while!"

"For a while," I agreed; "but, remember, only for a while!"

She said nothing, and it was too dark for me to see her face. Have I informed you that she has a most beautiful face?

"I am," I began, "by no means accustomed to approach young ladies in this way, Miss Marion!"

"Oh," she interrupted, "by no means?"

"That," I continued severely, "is what I remarked! But the present circumstances are unusual, and you can readily see that you are the circumstances! Honestly, I never met a girl like you before. You——"

"I know, I know; but you were to talk about *you*."

"Don't interrupt me, please," I said.

" I am only proving my good judgment! To return to the point, and as I was saying, I've never met a girl like you before, and——"

" You're off the subject, Mr. Ware! "

" Never, Miss Marion. I am constantly thinking of you! Since I met you a few days ago, I—well, honestly—go ahead and ask me a few questions about me! Please! "

Again she laughed. We were approaching a miniature Buckingham Palace.

" Go ahead! " I urged.

" No. I live here! "

" I don't mean that. I mean—ask something! "

" All right, I will. I'll ask you and Charlie to call on me some Sunday afternoon. Is that satisfactory? " She looked at me meekly.

" Of course. But it's only a postponement! " I reminded.

Suddenly she turned. " I don't——"

" Ah," I interrupted quickly, " you don't but you will! "

And so the evening passed.

As I read this over, I am wondering that I should have been able to display all that nerve, when at the present moment my heart has sunk so low it is tickling my feet!

(*Letter to Mr. Ware's parents.*)

JAN. 29th.

HONEST FOLKS: How you managed to get those cakes down to me so soon is beyond comprehension, but however soon it was they disappeared sooner. Within thirty minutes of their arrival, had I announced my candidacy for president or mayor, I could have had all the votes in The Antler. I never saw a man become so popular in half an hour. Even Mrs. Leonidas Spur assured me that they were delicious, and would I ask Mother for the recipe? Which same I hereby do.

So, Dad, you were told by Mr. Lothrop that the business world thinks highly of Mr. Whitney? Well, Lothrop ought to know, he's got a place that's pretty large himself. Mr. Whitney certainly is nice, and when you stop to think that he's got a little army working for him and that he is very simple and unaffected, you can readily see why I admire him.

Of course I have just started in to get acquainted with my work, but I like what I am doing, and that is the most important thing. The men are all decent chaps. Mr. Norcross, my immediate boss, is a bit garrulous, but I can forgive him for that.

I have met a lot of nice people—Charlie Little, one of my great friends at the front; a fine old doctor, Vincent is his name, a cousin to Freddy; and some other people. Do you know anyone named Blaine? The rain seems to like our part of the state, because it's been raining here all day. Sun shining, and then down it came—cats and dogs.

I sha'n't be able to spend any week-ends with you yet; not for a while, at least. I've got to get settled and save some money. Please forward the *Record* and tell Billie that I want to see some of his poetic effusions published in it. Will write soon. Lots of love and kisses.

PHIL.

(*Letter to Mr. Whitney from Mr. Ware.*)

JANUARY 30th, 1919.

MY DEAR MR. WHITNEY:

He was UGLY!
He was POOR!
But, his wife LOVED him!
Because he was a GENIUS!
He could KNOT a Bow Tie without HER help!

INFORMAL LESSONS in the ART of WEARING NECKTIES
TAUGHT at the MEN'S DEPARTMENT
Would be BENEFICIAL
To the STORE
To SALES
To HUMANITY!

Yours respectfully,
PHILIP WARE.

(*Extract from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

FEB. 4th.

MET Charlie Little to-day. Speaking of our still undated engagement with Marion some Sunday afternoon, I made him promise to call on her and sort of enlighten her as to what I am, and what I have done. I gave him a free hand. He did do one good thing: he told me that Marion is always home on Thursdays. A hint to the wise gathers no moss. I shall remember the day. He was a bit dumpy over Miss Sylvia Hartley, seems she smiled at someone a few years ago, and the green-eyed monster has been troubling him. Invited me to take a little pleasure trip; but no pleasure trips for mine, not on fifteen dollars a week. Charlie is one nice boy. Offered to finance me, as he put it, until I earn enough to live in style. He's pretty wealthy in his own right. Well, I'm perfectly happy here, and, who knows, perhaps I'll be a good deal happier. Thursday will tell. Got letter from the folks, and it seems the old town was ablaze with Lothrop's buying out the New Tinney Store in Winchell. Passing something like forty thousand dollars like that is no daily event, I'll say. I can imagine the excitement when he puts the goods on sale. A regular fair, I'll bet.

(*Letter to Miss Marion Blaine from Mr. Ware.*)

FEBRUARY 5th, 1924.

DEAR MISS MARION: Now that you have read the end first, and know from whom this unexpected letter is, you will not be surprised to learn that on Thursday evening I shall ring your front-door bell and ask if you are at home.

Very sincerely yours,
PHILIP WARE.

(*Headlines of the Oriole "Daily News" of February 5th.*)

Cliftondale in Flames
Business Section Destroyed

(*Cheque drawn at the Oriole National Bank, February 5th.*)

FEB. 5th, 1924.

ORIOLE NATIONAL BANK

PAY TO the order of
Philip Ware
One Thousand Dollars
$1,000.XX (Signed) *Charles Little.*

(*Telegram from Cliftondale to Mr. George Whitney of Oriole City.*)

FEB. 5th.

Opportunity arrives to-morrow morning nine. Must see you. Important.
PHILIP WARE.

(*Extract from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

FEB. 5th.

I CAN'T believe it!

This morning I wrote Marion a short note inviting myself out to her house on Thursday evening. I went out to mail it, and after dropping it into the box started for work, when I noticed the newspaper headlines, "Cliftondale in Flames!" For a while I was scared stiff about the folks; but when I read that it was the business section I knew that it was all right.

Our house, thank the Lord, is over three miles from the square. And then in a flash I realized that the business section meant Lothrop's—and away I went in a flat ten seconds to Charlie Little's apartment. He was in bed.

"Listen," I told him, "I need a thousand dollars!"

He closed his eyes again.

"I know people," he says to me soothingly, "who need a lot more!"

"Come off!" I yelled. "I tell you I need it!"

"Ring the bell, Phil," he whispers softly, "and George will bring you the ice bag. You've got a bad headache!"

I couldn't wait to argue. I just yanked him out and scribbled an I O U under his nose.

"No kidding, Charlie. Write a cheque. I'm going home for a while. There's been a big fire!"

In an instant he was serious, and off I was sprinting for the bank. Then—into a taxi, and to the station, and away to Cliftondale!

It was then I realized what I was trying to do and, believe me, but I was scared!

The first thing I had to do was to telephone or, some way or other, get hold of Mr. Lothrop. Feeling sure that he would be resting at his home I had myself carted over to his big mansion. The gods were with me!

"Is Mr. Lothrop in?" I asked the maid.

"He ain't seeing anyone!" she replied.

"I know that," I answered, coolly, "that's why I came here. Tell him that a business man has just come from Oriole City to see him." I handed her my visiting card.

And I just followed her right in!

He was sitting in the library, resting in an easy chair. He looked tired, but not the tiniest bit discouraged.

He waved me to a chair.

"Mr. Lothrop," I began, without further parley, "I understand that you bought out the Tinney Establishment in Winchell."

He nodded.

"Now, sir," I went on, "I am here to make you an offer for the goods you hold; that is, of course, providing they are what I think them to be. In the first place, they're still at Winchell, are they not?"

"They're still there!"

"Well, then," I said, "I am prepared to make a deposit of one thousand dollars for the privilege of securing an option on those goods, if, after my examination of them, they are satisfactory!"

I REELED that off like a Friday-afternoon declamation. I'm not sure I knew myself what I was saying; but, even if I do admit it, it sounded swell!

"I'll tell you, sir," began Mr. Lothrop, "this fire has just about taken every ready cent of mine. I need cash! Now, I paid forty-three thousand dollars——"

"All right, sir," I interrupted, "then I will make an immediate offer, based on your own well-known business ability. I will buy the stock at the price you paid for it. Obviously, if you keep it, you will have the expenses of storage, insurance, and a certain depreciation in the values. I

am prepared to make an immediate deposit, as I say, of one thousand dollars. I will arrange to furnish the balance within seventy-two hours."

I paused.

"May I ask what firm you represent?"

I hesitated for a moment. "Frankly, sir, I am starting out for myself!"

He thought for a moment. "Well, Mr. Ware, I accept your offer! However, you realize that the goods you purchase must not be sold here in Cliftondale, because I intend to rebuild and I expect to have a hard enough time with my competitors as it is!"

"Of course," I said, as if buying forty-three thousand dollars' worth of goods was a daily occurrence; "of course!"

He went over to his desk, and, taking a sheet of paper, began to write, talking as he did so. "Really, Mr. Ware, the investment is a good one, providing you can sell the goods immediately!"

He signed the agreement, and I handed him ten crisp one-hundred-dollar bills.

"Have you such a thing as a list of the goods in the store?"

"Here you are, Mr. Ware!" And so, with the typewritten invoice of the contents of the Tinney Store in my hand, I left—but I had to sit down on the front steps and fan myself with my hat!

I just had time to see the folks and to send a wire to Mr. Whitney and then beat it back to Oriole. So here I am wondering what will happen to-morrow, also slightly perturbed over the possibility that Marion does not believe in love at first sight!

(*Note found by Miss Marion Blaine in a box containing a dozen roses.*)

MARION: If I don't tell you this minute that I love you, then I'll surely bust! And if I bust, I sha'n't be able to tell you Thursday evening—so I'd better tell you now. PHILIP.

(*Extracts from Mr. Ware's Diary.*)

FEBRUARY 6th.

Believe me, there was no waiting for Mr. Whitney this time. I zipped into his office and was ready for him the minute he appeared.

"Mr. Whitney," I started right off the reel, knowing that he was accustomed to receiving surprises from me, "I hold an option on goods now contained in the Tinney Store at Winchell. It expires the day after to-morrow. I want you to examine that stock and see if you are interested!"

He didn't say a word, just looked at me with a quizzical air. "You have a what?"

I handed him the list and the agreement. He read it through carefully, then smiled to himself. "Young man, do you realize that you stand to lose a thousand dollars? There is no signature of any witness to this document!"

"Any document that Lothrop of Cliftondale signs needs no witness!" I replied, hotly.

Mr. Whitney smiled.

"I'll have to tell him that!"

Then he lifted a finger, as if talking to a ten-year-old. "Now, then, young man! Slowly, distinctly, and without excitement."

"Well, sir, I heard from my folks, and also saw in the Cliftondale *Record* that Mr. Lothrop had bought out the stock of the Tinney Company, and that the price was in the neighbourhood of forty thousand dollars. When I heard yesterday that his place had been destroyed by fire, I knew that the goods would be a millstone if he didn't get rid of them immediately. So I borrowed a thousand dollars, took the train—and there you are!"

I WAVED my hands as if introducing myself to him, and then I became very serious.

"Now, Mr. Whitney, I'm in your employ. I'm interested in this store. I've been thinking that what you need is one of these bargain basements where everything *is* a bargain and where everything, if the place is conducted right, is sold. This Tinney stock will just offer you the chance of opening a basement with all the variety of choice that will make every woman in Oriole City bless you three times a day!"

Mr. Whitney tapped on the desk for a minute with his pencil. "The Tinney Store! H'm! Hah! Well, Mr. Ware, I will speak to Mr. Sawyer, the chief buyer here, and see what he says. As for your basement suggestions, the directors have been considering that and are as yet undecided."

"The directors?" I echoed, having heard that Mr. Whitney was sole manager and director himself.

Mr. Whitney smiled. "Yes," he said, "the directors!"

I sat back, a bit abashed.

"However, Philip," continued Mr. Whitney ("you don't mind my calling you Philip?), suppose you come up here at two this afternoon, and I'll let you know Mr. Sawyer's opinion. If I take the goods, you will gain, I assure you; if I do not, I think I can arrange matters so that you will not lose your deposit! Also, suppose you dine with me this evening. I'm always home on Thursdays."

I had nodded dumbly in acceptance when I remembered, reminded by his words, "Home on Thursdays," this was

I hastened to the door, and there stood a young lady, with a peculiar

Thursday, the night of nights, the first time to see Marion alone! I didn't know what to say. My misery must have shown in my face, for he asked, "What's wrong?"

"I'm sorry, sir," I stammered, "I—I——"

"Sure!" laughed my employer. "I know! She wouldn't like it! Well, son, don't worry. When you see her to-night tell her that your salary will be enough for two! Now, be back this afternoon and if I'm a bit late wait for me. I'm taking my niece out to luncheon. You know the ways of women."

So here I am in my room, waiting for the hours to pass and for two o'clock to come. But, more still, for evening and Marion!

FEBRUARY 8th.

I'M still a bit shaky when I think of all that happened yesterday, and I don't know that I have it all straight myself. Let's see!

At two o'clock I was sitting in the anteroom waiting for Mr. Whitney. He arrived about half-past, I should judge, and ushered me into his private office, smiling cheerfully.

"Well, Philip, we'll buy that stock from you. In fact, Mr. Sawyer tells me that his bid two weeks ago was only some three hundred dollars less than Mr. Lothrop's, so you see we aren't really asleep! About that basement, I haven't decided yet; that will depend on an investigation that you will make.

The board of directors determined, however, that I need a confidential secretary who can earn, as a start, thirty-five hundred dollars a year, and it was unanimously passed that Mr. Philip Ware be offered the job."

It was then I suspected I was suffering from a case of postponed shell-shock!

There was a tapping at the door, a peculiar knock—two raps, an interval, and then a third rap.

"Just open it, will you, Philip? It's a special signal reserved for directors!"

I hastened to the door, and there stood a young lady, with a peculiar teasing smile in her eyes, a smile on her lips, and a wonderfully serene face!

"Come in, Marion!" boomed Mr. Whitney. "You're just in time to hear Mr. Ware accept our offer. By the way, let me introduce the two of you: my niece, Miss Blaine—also my sole comrade on the board of directors—and Mr. Philip Ware, my secretary!"

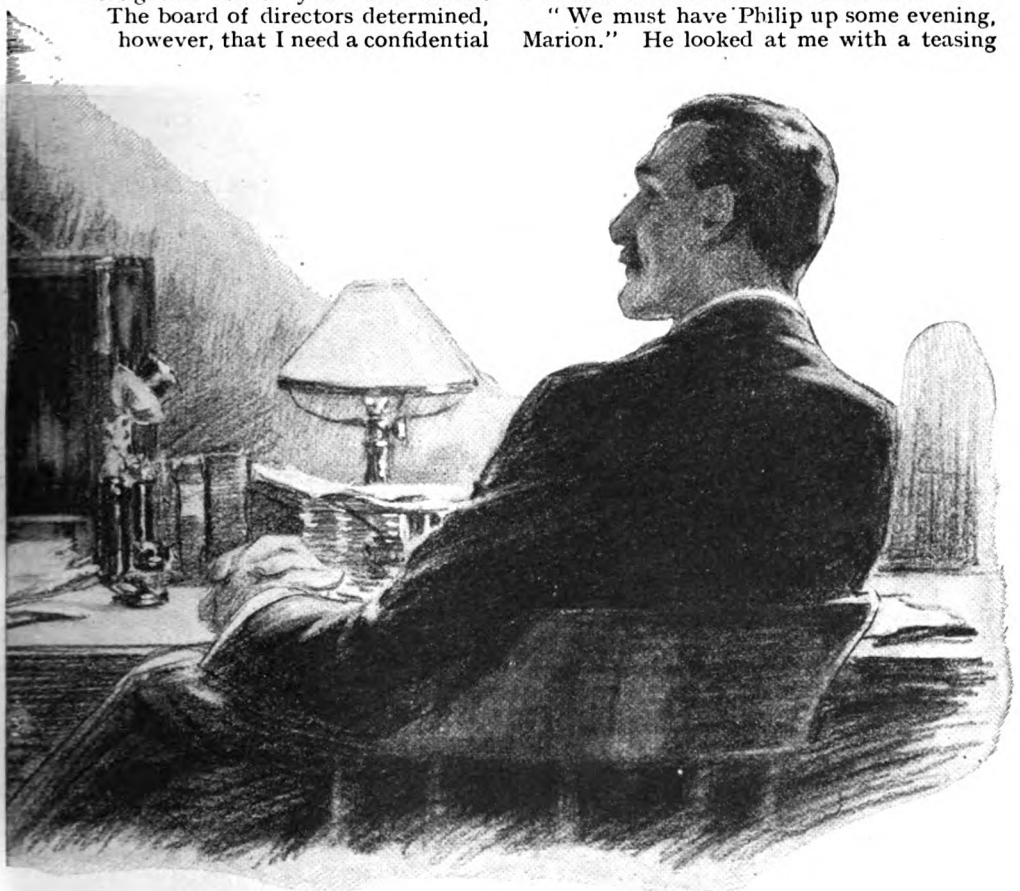
I bowed, only now that I think of it I'm sure I bobbed like a housemaid.

"We must have Philip up some evening, Marion." He looked at me with a teasing smile. "He can't come to-night because he has to tell a certain young lady that his salary will support two!"

Marion was fiddling with some of the papers on her uncle's desk.

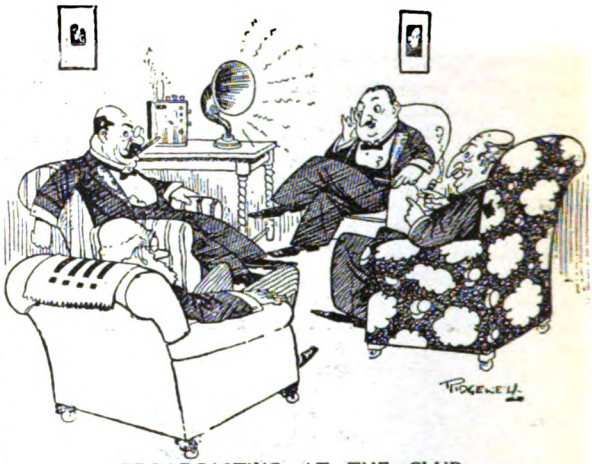
Suddenly my heart gave a leap within me, and the blood rushed throbbing to my temples, for——

"If that's all that's keeping Mr. Ware," said Marion Blaine, very, very carelessly and very, very gently, "I think he may dine with us to-night!"



teasing smile in her eyes, a smile on her lips, and a wonderfully serene face.

THE HUMOURS OF WIRELESS

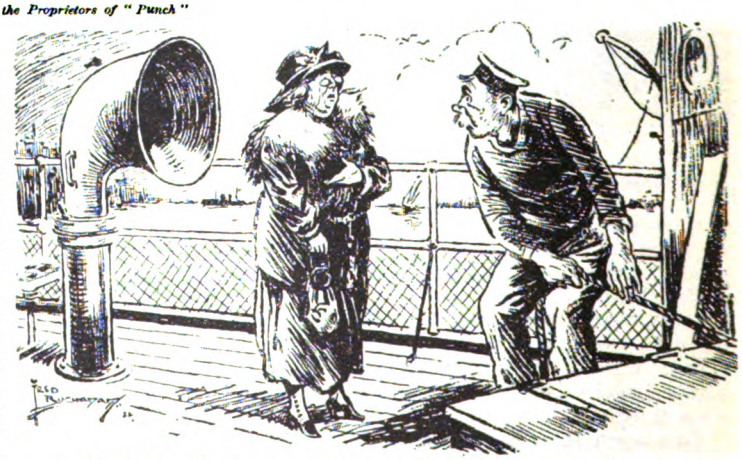


BROADCASTING AT THE CLUB.
Voice from 2LO: "Hullo, pets!"
Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

UNDOUBTEDLY the funniest thing about wireless is that it isn't. Every enthusiastic amateur who has toiled with coils and enmeshed himself in festoons of aerial wire in his endeavours to construct and erect his little "receiving station" has met the incorrigible humorist who remarks: "Hullo, old chap—I thought this was supposed to be *wireless!*" And every humorist who has perpetrated this supreme joke is firmly convinced that he is the originator of it. In all probability he is right, for an idea of that kind, like opportunity, comes once to everybody. Besides, it would be unfair to lay the blame on any particular individual. Although the "wireless" joke obviously cannot be older than the invention itself, it has aged so rapidly that it certainly deserves to be relegated to a Museum for Classic Chestnuts. Let us, therefore, forget it and turn to better and brighter things.

It has been said that the true wireless enthusiast prefers to make his own apparatus rather than to buy one that will work. This may be rather hard on the "home constructor," but it is nevertheless true that the new hobby has produced a large number of amateurs whose knowledge of the subject is more theoretical than practical. It has presented unique opportunities for the quasi-scientific to impress their less brainy brethren with their knowledge of the jargon.

LIMITATIONS OF WIRELESS.
Anguish of expert heckler on hearing vulnerable arguments in electioneering speech.
Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch"

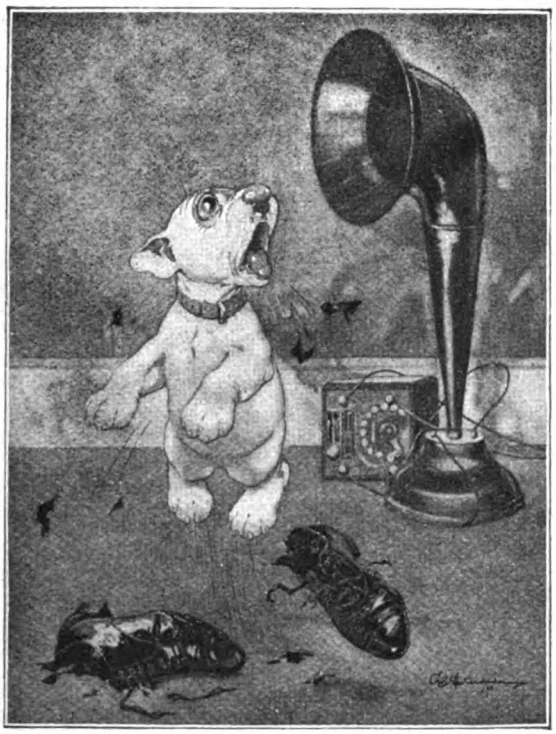


The Passenger (who has been listening at the ventilator): "Sailor, can you tell me what time these wireless concerts commence?"

Nothing can be more disconcerting to an inquiring parent than to be told by a ten-year-old son that "the amplitude is incorrectly tuned with the diaphragm, producing a heterodyne of the inductance, thereby causing the microhenries of the variometer to become dielectric, papa."

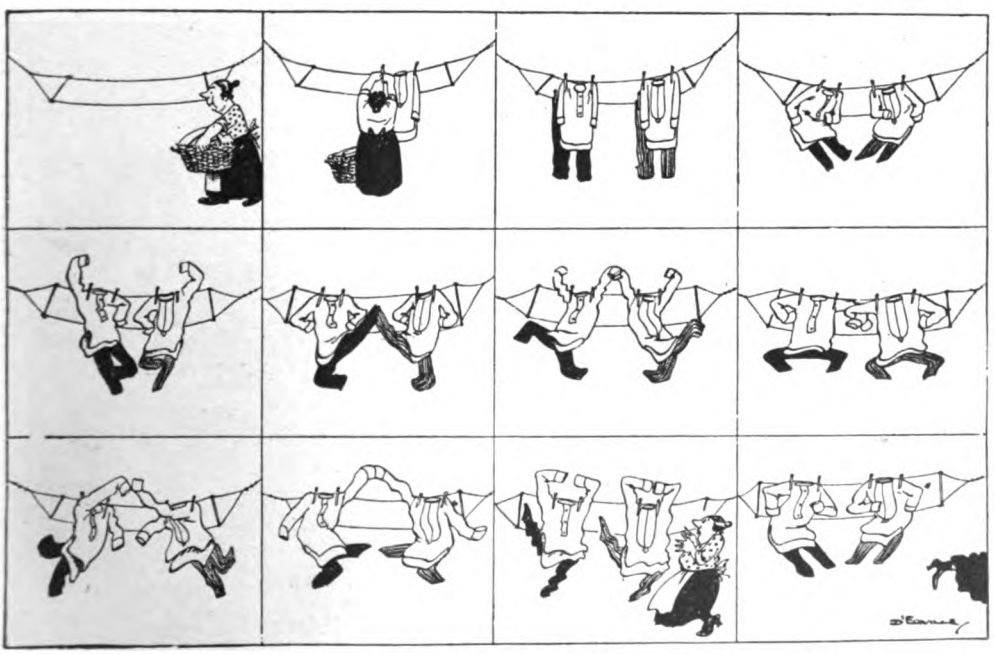
The attitude of the average child towards the wonder of the age is, however, a little more ingenuous. It is recorded that one little girl whose father had bought and erected a receiving set, which for some reason or other failed to function, suggested that it might not be the fault of the apparatus at all. "Perhaps the wireless people don't know we've got one yet," she said. Another little girl, who was invited by some neighbours to listen in for the first time, adjusted the 'phones and waited, but as soon as the voice of the announcer called "Hullo, hullo," she handed them back and said: "You'd better speak to him, please. I don't know what to say."

In the early days of broadcasting, before the programmes were published in the newspapers, "Uncle Arthur"



HIS BROADCAST MASTER'S VOICE.

By permission of "The Sketch."



THE EFFECT OF THE WIRELESS DANCE ORCHESTRA ON THE LAUNDRY.

TWO "HELLO" CALLS.

had occasion, at the end of the Children's Hour, to make an announcement of interest to parents.

"Ask daddy and mummy to take the 'phones for a minute—or, better still, ask them to buy a loud speaker," he said.

Whereupon a youngster who was inordinately proud of his father's receiving set walked up to the horn of the loud speaker and shouted: "We've *got* one!"

An amusing story typifying the attitude of modern youth towards authority is that of the two "flappers" who were being severely reprimanded by their father for misbehaviour. As he was leaving the room he concluded: "And understand once and for all that I will not tolerate such unseemly conduct in any children of mine. Don't let me hear any more of it."

"2LO now closing down," whispered one girl to the other.

Of the older folk some are quite awed by the wonders of the wireless, experiencing them with the incredulity of the countryman who said when he saw a giraffe, "I don't believe it!" whilst others are full of admiration.

Perhaps you have heard the story of the rustic who saw in the sky some vast letters written in clouds of smoke by an airman employed to advertise a certain newspaper.

"Martha, come quick," he shouted to his wife. "There's one o' they there wireless messages caught fire!"

The following incident is perfectly true. A young enthusiast who had made a three-valve set invited an elderly relative to listen to the various broadcasting stations. The old gentleman, before settling down to

THE WIRELESS WIDOW.
By permission of "The Sketch."

Visitor: "How nice for him! Now he can listen to all the best music."
Fond Mother: "Yes—and it's so good for his ears—they did stick out so."
Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

listen, insisted on being told exactly how it worked. The proud constructor explained as simply as he could the principles of wireless telephony, the system of tuning, the use of the valves and the batteries that operated them. The old fellow listened with keen interest. Then he adjusted the 'phones and enjoyed half an hour's broadcast music. When he rose to go he thanked the young man for the pleasant evening; then, shaking his head very wisely, he said: "Ah, me! Wonderful thing, steam."

Less appreciative was another elderly party who, after listening in for the first time, was asked whether she did not consider the invention wonderful.

"I don't know," she replied. "I expect it could have been done before if somebody had thought of it in time."

Another authentic story is that of the enthusiastic but unimaginative amateur who wished to erect his aerial on a flagstaff at the bottom of his garden. First he climbed up a tree which was in close proximity to the staff, but found to his dismay that he could not reach it. Then he tried climbing up the staff itself, but,

THE FIRST LOUD SPEAKER.
By permission of "The Bystander."

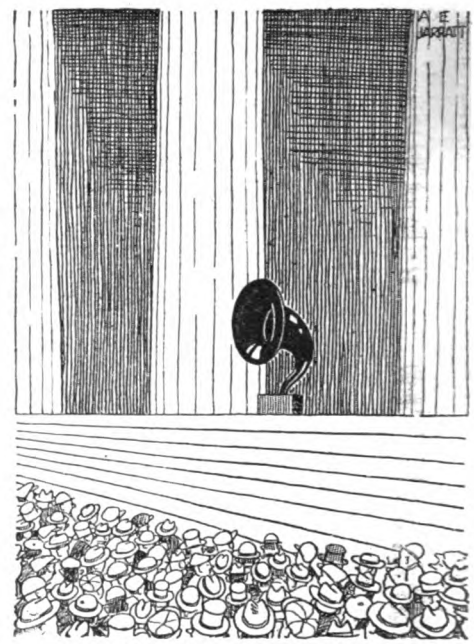
finding that it had a tendency to sway rather perilously under his weight, descended in haste. Several helpful neighbours vied with one another in offering flippant suggestions as to how to get the aerial pulley to the top of the mast, but it was a small boy who eventually solved the problem.

"Daddy," he said, "why not lift the flagstaff out of its socket and lie it upon the ground?"

A somewhat similar incident occurred within the writer's own experience. An amateur in South London erected an enormous pole with concrete base, stay wires, and other fittings complete, but just as he was hauling his aerial into position the rope snapped, with the result that he had to take the pole down again. In the process he trampled down some sweet peas, broke his fence, his conservatory window, and nearly his neck. He declares that there is no humour in wireless.

The greatest delight to the amateur experimenter is, of course, to receive messages from long distances. An alleged conversation between two radio enthusiasts runs as follows:—

"Wonderful results last night. I stayed up till two o'clock and got America."



THE NEXT ELECTION.
The Prospective Candidate addresses the Constituents by Radio.
By permission of "London Opinion."

A WIRELESS WASH-OUT—AND A LITTLE LOCAL DISTURBANCE.
By permission of "The Bystander."

"That's nothing. I stayed up till half-past two—and got Chile."

Inaudibility is not a common fault amongst those who lecture from the broadcasting studios. There is, however, an amusing story of a young wife who had been listening to a cookery lecture.

"John, dear," she said to her husband later in the evening, "they gave out such a lovely recipe for a new pie this afternoon, but I couldn't quite catch whether the lady said 'ham' or 'jam.'"

No collection of anecdotes is complete without at least one "featuring" the Scotsman. Broadcasting is very popular beyond the Tweed, and the transmission of religious services is said to be greatly appreciated, because it enables the "guid folk" to stay at home and save their threepences.

Lastly, there is a story told of a Hebrew amateur who was listening in on his new valve set whilst his little son was playing on the floor.

Suddenly he exclaimed in a loud voice:—

"Stop rattling that money-box, Ikey—Aberdeen's calling."

"N" FOR NELSON

by

BERTRAM ATKEY

ILLUSTRATED BY
C.E.BROCK.R.I.

I.

THERE is only one way in which a person can meet the preposterous accusation that one has imperfectly washed one's neck that morning—especially if it is hurled across the breakfast table by a sarcastic sister at the precise moment when an ambitious mouthful of bread and sausage unfortunately debars one from dignified retort. Silent contempt is the only way—and it was that way which Nelson Chiddenham adopted.

Through his big round lenses he regarded Sister Ella with silent contempt and slightly distended cheeks. Silently he flushed a dull poppery hue, and contemptuously he handed his cup to Brother August to be passed up the long table to his mother for replenishment.

August glared sideways at his little brother.

"Can't you say 'please,' you young blighter?" he demanded.

"Hardly—with that mouthful," explained Ella, third eldest of his fourteen sisters.

"Pass up, please, Aug," said Nelson, sausage-ly, ignoring Ella with great care.

"Just because that mangy little bag-o'-bones you called a grizzly grey wolf-cub is dead you think you can do as you like, you young ass," growled Aug, who was smarting from his grown-up brother Ambrose's swift and unvarnished refusal of Aug's well-meant, kind, and confident offer to ride Ambrose's wonderful four-year-old hunter for him at the forthcoming Horse Show. Ambrose believed in riding his own horses.

But Nelson ignored the observation.

He was too busy in his mind to take serious notice of any observation made by any member of the large Chiddenham family—except his deep-voiced father, Squire Chiddenham, or his mother, and these rarely offered gratuitous observations likely to wound or to harrow.

It is true that on the death of the little wolf-cub, very laboriously acquired from the wolf-tamer of a small circus some time before, Nelson had expected a little sympathy from his brothers and sisters. And when, a few days after the passing of the grizzly-grey, Nelson's dog Dusty passed also—over the brow of a deep chalk-pit, with mortal results—the boy had been shocked at the lack of sympathy evinced and the sparseness of condolence offered by all but his mother and father. Mother, indeed, had seemed really upset; but then, Nelson knew that things falling into chalk-pits always upset his mother. She had been so when he himself fell into the chalk-pit that time—mercifully the shallower end.

To lose two close friends in such rapid succession, even though they be but a dog and an invalid wolf, is a grievous blow, and thirteen-year-old Nelson was feeling it.

He escaped from the breakfast table as soon as he decently could—just as soon as the sausages were gone and Aug had cleared the marmalade dish with that thoroughness which characterized Aug's way with marmalade dishes—and, brooding absently, made for his old secret retreat, the inner apartment of the sty of the Gloucester Old Spot.

But, even as he arrived, he recollected rather guiltily that here, too, there was a gap that could never really be filled. This old friend also had left. The sty was as vacant of pig as Nelson was full of sausage—pork sausage, alas! for the Gloucester Old Spot had two days before been "called upon."

It was all very dejecting, and as the boy

Copyright, 1924, by Bertram Atkey.

went down the long drive, heading for the Big Wood, where, in a disused, half-ruined game-keeper's cottage he maintained his now depleted collection of naturalistic novelties, he went unblithely.

His eyebrowless eyes stared a little grimly through the big lenses temporarily called for by a completely unforeseen mischance with a handful of ordinary blasting powder—such as might happen to any boy of an inquiring disposition; and he seemed to sag somewhat more than usual on the leg which was straightened and reinforced by a stiffly-built construction of iron and leather—made necessary *pro tem.* by the obstinacy and churlishness of a mule which Nelson, some months before, believed he had sufficiently quelled for riding purposes—a belief which, when he recovered consciousness, Nelson frankly admitted to have been incorrect.

IT is, then, understood that this narrative definitely opens with the iron heel of the world weighing somewhat emphatically upon the neck of Nelson Rodney Drake Chiddenham, youngest son of Squire Chiddenham of Chiddenham Hall, Chiddenham-on-the-Chidden.

But his oval chin—mother's—was stuck out, and if his slender shoulders stooped slightly as he limped along the spirit of Nelson drooped not at all. He was sad—but he was resolute and grimly determined to avenge Dusty, the dog.

The wolf-cub had died a natural death—very natural indeed considering its condition when acquired by Nelson—but he suspected that Dusty, good old Dusty, had been murdered. He was not yet *sure*, but he was working on the matter now, and already his wits—quicker and far more valuable than Nelson or any member of his family dreamed—were straining in the leash, as one may excusably put it, towards a certain malefactor with whom Nelson had already fought skirmishes.

He was naming this evil-doer under his breath as he turned out of the drive.

"It was Partridge Johnson who drove Dusty over into the chalk-pit with that great lurcher of his. I'm sure of it—if I can't prove it yet. But I shall prove it before long——"

He broke off as, rounding a curve in the road, he came face to face with a large gentleman, prosperous of appearance, leisured of manner, severe of aspect, tweed-clad, strolling in the morning sunlight, enjoying the clean fresh spring air with the assistance of a large, even obese, cigar.

Nelson halted crisply—raising his cap, for he was not lacking in courtesy and, moreover, Sir Milner Bayliss, financier, was a neighbour of his father's and surprisingly un-hostile to Nelson.

"Good morning, Nelson, my boy," said Sir Milner—a childless man and, therefore, poverty-stricken in spite of the million or so which he owned.

"Good morning, sir."

Each surveyed the other gravely.

"You are looking a little peaky, Nelson, my boy," stated Sir Milner, who, in the course of the City business from which this morning he was taking a rest, had doubtless had frequent opportunities of studying "peakiness" on the faces of others.

"Yes—peaky. Is anything wrong?"

"No, sir," said Nelson, staring with rather wide eyes past Sir Milner, who frowned slightly, his hard eyes intent on the boy.

"How's the wolf-cub?"

(Quite unconsciously Sir Milner had aided Nelson to possession of that once desirable little animal.)

"Dead, sir."

Nelson blinked in the sunlight, but his lips—father's—tightened a little.

"Eh? Eh? I'm sorry to hear that—very sorry."

Sir Milner said no more. There are times when one can overdo sympathy—and this, Sir Milner fancied, was one of them.

He took a slow puff at his cigar, staring over the hedge.

Nelson caught up his emotions and held them tightly.

"I was looking glum, sir, more because of Dusty than the wolf. The wolf never was very well, and he never grew a bit, but Dusty was a—a real good dog."

Nelson paused to grind his teeth a little. The grinding of teeth, he had discovered, is an admirable and not too staringly noticeable method of preventing the rush of undesired hot water to the eyes—when one is a little under the Iron Heel.

Sir Milner stared steadily at the hedge.

"What's wrong with Dusty, boy?" he demanded, his tone carefully casual.

"Dusty's dead," stated Nelson, very shortly—for fear of quavers.

"Eh! Too bad—that's too bad. Some time or other you'd better tell me about that, my boy. Too bad."

There was a long cigarry pause.

Presently Sir Milner faced Nelson.

"There were some pups of a kind up at the kennels at my place, Nelson," he said, slowly. "And I've no doubt I could have spared you a couple—if you cared about a cross-bred——"

"Cared about——!" Nelson whispered his amazement.

"Well, I mean—that is, it's a curious cross—hum! The fact is, boy, there seems

to have been a—er—*mésalliance*—owing to one of my gamekeeper's carelessness at the bloodhound trials some time ago. My best red setter, Champion Kitty Kilkee, recently presented us with half-a-dozen queer little beggars that were half setters, half bloodhounds. But they weren't kept—except one for sake of the mother. Watson, the keeper, wanted that for a few weeks to keep her from fretting. But whether the pup's still about I can't say. *If* it is, you're welcome to it, Nelson. Both its parents are champions in the field as well as on the bench. But I fancied Watson said something about getting rid of it now——"

He broke off as a hen pheasant flew fussily across the road over their heads.

Sir Milner's eyes followed the bird affectionately.

"If only you could find out who it is stealing so many of my pheasants' eggs, I'd give you the pick of Kitty Kilkee's next litter into the bargain, and there will be no bloodhound strain in those, my boy!" he said. "I'm losing an appalling number of eggs this year—appalling——"

Then he thought of something.

"But you'll have to hurry, my boy, if you want to have that cross-bred! It's just come to me that Watson said something about mercifully putting it out of the way to-day. It may be gone—you'd better hurry up there at once, Nelson—say I said you were to have it—if still living. No, no—no thanks—*hurry*, boy."

He found himself alone, staring at a spurt of dust.

Nelson was hurrying.

Nelson hurled himself at a person in velveteen about to immerse a small reddish bundle in a large tub.

His advent upon the scene of the pending kennel tragedy will probably be remembered by the head keeper and an *aide* when they have forgotten the arrival in the same immediate neighbourhood of many more dangerous things, such as forked lightning or even those thunderbolts which are so frequently said to arrive on the countryside but are so rarely seen.

Nelson came reeling round the corner of the kennels, his face not less red than fire, his breath coming in long dry gasps, his glasses dimmed, and croaking raven-like the word "Stop!" hurled himself at a person in velveteen about to immerse a small reddish bundle in a large tub. It was the last of the poor little wretches resulting from the *mésalliance*.

"M-mine!" gasped Nelson, briefly, and took it with swift and clutchful paws.

"Eigh ?" muttered the assistant keeper. The puppy yelped at the clutch, and "Mine. Sir Milner said so!" explained Nelson, glaring, but easing his grip a little.

The pup snuggled close into his arms—and straightway into his heart.

The head keeper grinned.

"You were just in time, no more, Mast' Chiddenham!" he said, looking pleased—as indeed he was. There lives not the man worthy of the name who finds the task of drowning a puppy anything but intensely distasteful.

Nelson nodded, getting his breath back. Head keeper Watson was a kindly man at heart, and he suggested that milk went well after intense effort. It was to be found at his cottage close by, he added.

So together they went off to the cottage, tucked under the edge of an adjoining woodland. Their way lay over a bit of rough ground sparsely covered with tufts of bracken, reedy grass, and brambles.

The puppy evinced a desire to walk, as puppies will. Nelson put him down and the queer, shapeless little blob of reddish wool went lumbering on, a few feet ahead.

"Rum little beggars, Mast' Chiddenham ?" chuckled Watson. "But I shouldn't be surprised if it turns out that that there pup has got a nose for game that'd shame many a field trial winner. Blood'ound and setter. He ought to have a nose, surelie."

And then, by sheer chance, he was proved forthwith a prophet of no mean order.

The pup, a few yards ahead of them, stopped suddenly and lifted his odd dumpling of a head as high in the air as he could reach, sniffing vigorously.

"Watch, Mast' Chiddenham! That's his setter blood—he's got a scent in the air. If he was a big dog that'd mean something a long way off. Never see him do that before."

Nelson watched with all his eyes and lenses. The puppy moved on, then suddenly dropped his nose to the ground, his absurd tail wagging wildly. He lumbered fatly forward, nose close down.

"And that's the bloodhound strain," said the keeper. "Look, Mast' Chiddenham."

Ten yards farther on the pup had "frozen" or "set" and was crouching, glaring straight ahead at a clump of bracken.

His face a study in surprise, Watson crept forward uttering soft, soothing words that sounded like "Hoe! Hoe! Hoe—good pup!" dropped on one knee by the funny little beast and very softly smoothed it with slow, gentle strokes, slightly pressing down. "Hoe, puppy——" and jerked his head to Nelson, who, understanding the gesture, went slowly forward.

There was a rush of wings, and an old cock pheasant burst up from the bracken like a bomb, and shrieking "Help! Help!" at the top of its voice, fled for the woods.

Nelson turned to see the puppy crouched quietly under the big brown hand of the keeper.

"Take him up, Mast' Chiddenham," said Mr. Watson, respectfully. "I've handled a wonderful many o' gun-dogs—but I never knew a pup his age do that *like* that—and I've nigh broke my heart trying to teach the six-month-old sons of champions—pointers and setters, too—to do it half or a quarter so well. Eh, Mast' Chiddenham, but I'm glad you ran fast enough to save him!"

He scratched his honest head, staring.

"I've knowed field trial winners set worse'n that, dom me if I haven't. So steady as a rock! If only 'twern't that it don't do for a man in *my* position to be seen handlin' sich curious cross-breds I might soon be very proud o' that pup o' your'n, Mast' Chiddenham."

The little dog was licking Nelson's hand—and Nelson's heart was big within him—inflated with a wild pride and a sharp sudden love that almost hurt. What a dog was this!—that could so command the admiration of a dog-wise man like Mr. Watson!

"Jus' don't hurry him, Mast' Chiddenham," advised the keeper. "Let him go forrard in his own way—as long as he goes right. I'll be glad to help you. Kind but firm—and whatever else you do, mind be life-everlasting patient! You got a dog there that'll never be beautiful—but you got a game-finder in ten thousand! Well, to be sure," concluded Mr. Watson, and so ponderously led the way to the milk.

II.

THOSE of his numerous family who showed the slightest interest in Nelson's supper announcement that he was the owner of the sole surviving son of Kitty Kilkee, champion setter, and Red Nemesis, champion blood-hound, expressed their interest mainly by loud laughter—Aug's musical bray being notably in evidence.

So Nelson closed up—like a hedgehog. But not without duly noting that his father, the squire, a man of field and flood, did not laugh.

"It's an unusual cross, Nelson, but it may produce a surprise if you are patient. Patience is the trick with pups," observed the squire, cocking a shaggy eyebrow at the cacophonous Aug.

Grateful for this crumb, Nelson happily devoured all that was set before him—and some that wasn't.

He caught his mother at a quiet moment in the corridor—it was his lucky night.

"Oh, mother, they laughed at supper, but honestly my pup is going to be a game-finder in a thousand! Watson said so—Sir Milner's head keeper," he told her. "And, I say, mum, I don't mind *your* seeing him set at his game any time you like—even before he's trained."

She looked down at the flushed face, the bright eyes, of her youngest child, her somewhat battered but still undaunted Benjamin, and her heart was warm—and her arms, too, for him.

"Thank you, sonny," she whispered in the shadows. "Be sure to tell me when you are ready—and I do hope that the puppy will be everything that Watson says. What are you going to name him, Nelson?"

But that was not a matter to be settled off-hand. Nelson explained gravely that he was thinking it over.

"It was kind of Sir Milner to give him to you," said mother.

Nelson nodded.

"I'm going to pay him back, mum," he declared, solemnly. "I'm going to find out who steals his pheasants' eggs. D'you think there's a bit of cold meat I could have for him to-night?"

With a family of eighteen—many still on her hands—and Income Tax what it is, Mother was a strict economist, but——

"There are some bits of cold beef—tell cook I said you could have them, sonny," she conceded, kissed him and went away—being most audibly in request in four places.

Nelson disappeared kitchenwards and was seen no more that night till bed-time.

PALE dawn discovered Nelson and the pup busy in the fields—for only Nelson knew what he expected the pup to learn, and the sooner he began the better.

It was not until long after Nelson had given ample proof that he was not devoid of the "life-everlasting patience" so highly recommended by Mr. Watson that, returning breakfastwards, his thoughts turned to the sufferings of Sir Milner at the hands of the egg-stealers and of his own tribulations at the hands of that ill-liver and evil-doer, Partridge Johnson.

That Mr. Johnson was a poacher and a thief Nelson, like many others, knew. That he was a lifter of pheasant eggs and a destroyer of small dogs Nelson suspected—and intended to prove.

Doubtless his plan for the practical carrying out of this intention rendered it necessary that, after breakfast, he should fade out and disappear wholly from the ken of his kin—as he did.

He might have been seen with his dog, half an hour after leaving his extremely empty plate, entering the shop of one Mr. Packer in the small town of Downsmore, a few miles from Chiddenham. Over the door Mr. Packer was described as a Naturalist and Taxidermist, though in the local newspaper he had recently been described as a bankrupt. Both descriptions were accurate, and the first was clearly proved by the contents of the window—a large case containing the stuffed carcasses of many birds, considerably moth-moulted, a number of fallow-deer antlers, a tray of glass eyes in various colours, sizes, and fixed stares, and an extremely stuffed cat possessing the surprising number of three tails, two tortoise-shell and one tabby—rather superfluously labelled "Rare Specimen."

Nelson and Mr. Packer, a quiet man with grey hair, a narrow face, mild brown eyes, and hardly any chin, were old acquaintances, and, unlike many, Nelson had not allowed Mr. Packer's recent financial contretemps to corrode their friendly relations. The naturalist was "carrying on" his business in his mother's name, and, at the moment of Nelson's arrival, solely in search of admiration for his dog, he appeared to be carrying it on in the small back room behind the shop.

Nelson was sufficiently intimate with Mr. Packer to have formed, with the naturalist's approval, a habit of going straight through to the back room should the shop be empty, and after he had looked through the glass panels of the door to see whether Mr. Packer was engaged. If he was alone Nelson usually entered without further formality.

Mr. Packer, viewed through the glass door behind the counter this morning, was busily engaged in taking from a lidded wicker basket a number of eggs and carefully packing them in egg-boxes.

Nelson, on the point of tapping the glass, caught a glimpse of one of the eggs—and refrained from tapping. The eggs were olive coloured and slightly smaller than those of the barnyard hen.

They were pheasants' eggs.

Nelson silently moved back and left the shop. He was a considerate youth and he had no desire to embarrass Mr. Packer—at least not until he had considered his discovery.

Nelson's brow was knit in a reflective frown as, abandoning his idea of inviting Mr. Packer's expert opinion of his pup, he started for home.

A boy of the country-side, and the son of a man who was a magistrate as well as a preserver of game and rearer of pheasants, Nelson Chiddenham knew that any man who

possessed pheasants' eggs in any quantity at this time of the year (unless he were a game-keeper or a recognized pheasant farm proprietor) was most probably in possession of stolen property.

He was well aware that the chinless Mr. Packer was not an importer of pheasants' eggs, nor otherwise a producer.

But he was very evidently a dealer in them. It threw no undue strain on Nelson's reasoning faculties to arrive at the conclusion that Mr. Packer had purchased these eggs from some local picker-up of carefully considered but inadequately protected trifles—with the intention of reselling them to purchasers of whom, doubtless, Mr. Packer knew.

Nelson halted at a wayside cottage with the legend "Mineral Waters. Teas. Partys Caterd For," displayed in chalk on a tarred board erected in the garden, and over a large bottle of ginger-beer considered his discovery.

He was shocked and sorry. Also he was disturbed.

Few people knew that countryside, for miles around, better than Nelson, and he could not but suspect that those eggs had probably come from nests of birds belonging to Sir Milner Bayliss, who bred, at fearful expense, some thousands of pheasants every year.

"If they didn't come from Sir Milner's they came from father's land," muttered Nelson to his small dog. "And that's stealing. And I've promised Sir Milner to do my best to help find out what happens to his pheasant eggs."

His eyes widened.

"And if I do Mr. Packer will—get into trouble—perhaps be sent to prison! I shouldn't like a friend of mine to be sent there. And if he had to go, what would happen to his weak sister?"

Among the various burdens upon his resources the unfortunate Mr. Packer counted a weak sister, and on very many occasions he had spoken to Nelson in moving terms of this afflicted lady.

She, on account of weakness, and her husband, on account of persistent ill luck, stated Mr. Packer, had to struggle very bitterly for a mere living—which, such as it was, came sifting to the cheerless pair through the medium of a hostelry, yclept the Waggoner's Rest, situated on the outskirts of Beechmastonbury, a market town some twelve miles distant.

Nelson had always been sorry for and intensely sympathetic with this weak sister, and had never ceased to regard Mr. Packer's statements concerning the sums of money and other gifts which he endlessly sent the delicate lady, as the statements of a very generous and high-minded man—and quite the last person really deserving of incarceration within the dungeons of the law for the crime of receiving, doubtless in a moment of financial desperation, stolen pheasants' eggs.

It was all very puzzling and complicated and distressing, and as Nelson proceeded homewards, there to deposit his dog in a safe place, he went absent-mindedly, concentrating on the really difficult problem of how he was going to keep his implied promise to help Sir Milner Bayliss in the matter of the pheasant eggs and at the same time to protect poor Mr. Packer from the grim clutch of the Law—for sake of his weak sister.

Evidently his reflections bore fruit, for Nelson's place was vacant at the luncheon table.

AT the hour of the midday meal Nelson Chiddenham was several miles from his home—sitting comfortably in the upper recesses of a large oak tree on the edge of a coppice not far from the rather remote and lonely habitation of Partridge Johnson and his wife. He was engaged in devouring, with that healthy relish inspired by sharp physical exertion, the really generous if mixed supply of provender which, by dint of maternal permission, he had secured in the kitchen before starting, and which thanks to the dexterity natural to small boys in these matters, he had been able largely to supplement while cook was preparing the sandwiches his mother had commanded for him.

Between mouthfuls—that is to say, at longish intervals—he took a regular survey of a small patch of brambly growth not far from the coppice.

In that patch were the nests of two pheasants, each with eight eggs. Nelson had discovered these nests some days before, and he believed that the industriously dishonest Partridge Johnson had done so also—led to that conclusion by the discovery of a heelmark, a half-burnt dottle of that peculiarly pungent tobacco affected by Mr. Johnson, and one or two minor clues of the kind which only a country-bred youth would note.

It was Nelson's theory that the prowling Mr. Johnson was watching and cherishing these nests with anxious and loving care until the hen pheasants had each produced possibly nine or ten eggs, when, in the normal course of his avocation, Mr. Johnson would spirit away the eighteen to twenty valuable eggs and by means of one or other of the various engines of destruction of which he was a past-master, so deal with the bereaved birds that in due course they would appeal

Nelson, on the point of tapping the glass, caught a glimpse of one of the eggs—and refrained from tapping.

well and truly roasted upon his dining-table. For Mr. Johnson was not a fastidiously particular man in the matter of seasonable game.

Nelson believed that Partridge would hardly care to risk waiting for more than eight or nine eggs per nest, for the hen pheasant is not a good mathematician, and her notion of what constitutes a satisfactory nestful of eggs is highly variable.

Moreover, there was the grave risk, in Mr. Johnson's view, of one of the game-keepers finding and taking steps to protect the eggs by the simple process of removing them to a safe place, where they could be hatched by humble barnyard hens.

Nelson had decided that the hour of the egg-snatching was at hand, and had made his plans accordingly. Three hours' patient waiting proved him right—as people who think things out with great care frequently are.

By what devious and serpentine ways Mr. Johnson, an artist in his way, approached the patch of cover Nelson was not privileged to discern, but at precisely twenty minutes to one o'clock—when early-rising game-keepers might reasonably be assumed to be sitting at home for a few minutes, a little heavy and temporarily inert after a bulk-some dinner—the boy saw a dingy brown blur bob up and down in the patch of cover. He realized that Mr. Johnson was professionally engaged—for Partridge invariably used a dingy brown blur as a hat.

A pheasant rose and flapped feebly a few

yards into the open, then fell. Evidently Mr. Johnson was armed with airgun or catapult.

Intent and watchful, Nelson waited—but Partridge Johnson did not appear.

He was notoriously a gentleman averse to wandering publicly in open country.

Mr. Johnson, then, did not come to the dead bird.

But the dead bird went to Mr. Johnson. A long arm was thrust out from a clump of brambles, and a very long hooked stick drew the pheasant quietly back to cover.

Nelson waited a little longer, then accelerated himself from the oak and cautiously proceeded to the scene of Mr. Johnson's recent operations.

All the eggs were gone—and, naturally, both pheasants.

"I knew it was him," said Nelson, composedly, and headed at a quick trot for the main road, where at a spot two miles away he hoped to intercept the afternoon motor-bus to Beechmastonbury. It was a near thing, and the boy who presently boarded the bus had the appearance of being literally red-hot throughout

But his eyes behind the dusty lenses were bright.

Nelson was investing a whole shilling in satisfying a tendril-like query coiled about his heart.

"I sha'n't have any more mercy on Partridge Johnson than he had on my dog, Dusty," he had told himself. "But I am sorry for Mr. Packer because of his weak sister——"

Almost he had decided to hand over Malefactor Johnson to Sir Milner without mentioning Mr. Packer—but at that point it had flashed into his mind that it might be a good plan to call and see the weak lady and ascertain as well as he could precisely how weak she was.

"I've got to be straightforward with Sir Milner and tell him the truth," mused Nelson, as he sat, cooling nicely, in the bus, "and I shall try to persuade him and father to let Mr. Packer off. But if they don't, the shock of hearing that her brother might have to appear at the Court might be dangerous for her in her weak state."

He had solved his problem by the time the bus neared Beechmastonbury.

"If she is too weak for a shock," he decided solemnly, "I shall tell Sir Milner that there is another man in league with Partridge Johnson, but that I cannot give his name for fear the shock ruins his weak sister for life. That will be quite honest. Then I shall have to make Mr. Packer promise—in writing—to stop buying pheasant eggs. Sir Milner or father will help me do the writing—and after that everything will be all right. And I shall have earned my new dog."

He wriggled a little, perceiving that his plan was good, and rose, limping to the door of the bus.

III.

NELSON CHIDDENHAM was a young fellow of tender heart, sympathetic disposition, and far-ranging imagination, and as he approached the Waggoner's Rest instinctively he aimed his eyes at the rather dirty upper windows of that wholly unattractive tavern, more than half expecting to see the thin pale face of a practically bedridden invalid peering wistfully out at the springtide countryside.

But there was visible no sign of the poor lady, and screwing up his courage one more notch—for the shabby, untidy, ugly little "beerhouse" was most uninviting—he approached the doorway. But he halted abruptly on the threshold, for only a very deaf person indeed could have approached that portal and remained in ignorance of certain sounds of discord from within.

Listening intently, Nelson gleaned that some person inside was being described and classified, with very considerable emphasis, as "no gentleman." Rather, the unseen object of criticism was to be considered a "lazy hound" and a "loafer," and other mysteriously-named things of which Nelson, fortunately, had never heard. The voice of the critic was feminine though rather hoarse, extremely rough, and acridly harsh. And it was rising to the scream of a virago.

Even as Nelson's heart began to fail—not inexcusably—a smallish man with a pale face but inflamed eyes shot violently out of the door—and promptly disappeared round the corner of the house. On his heels came a large and blowsy woman, with her hair in irons and big bare muscular arms. Her face was scarlet-patched with rage and her eyes glittered with a truly dangerous light. She nearly fell over Nelson, and halted to bawl a last insult at the down-trodden heel of the small man as it vanished round the corner. Then she turned to Nelson.

"Ger' out o' the way!" she snapped. "Who you staring at? What you want?"

Nelson raised his cap.

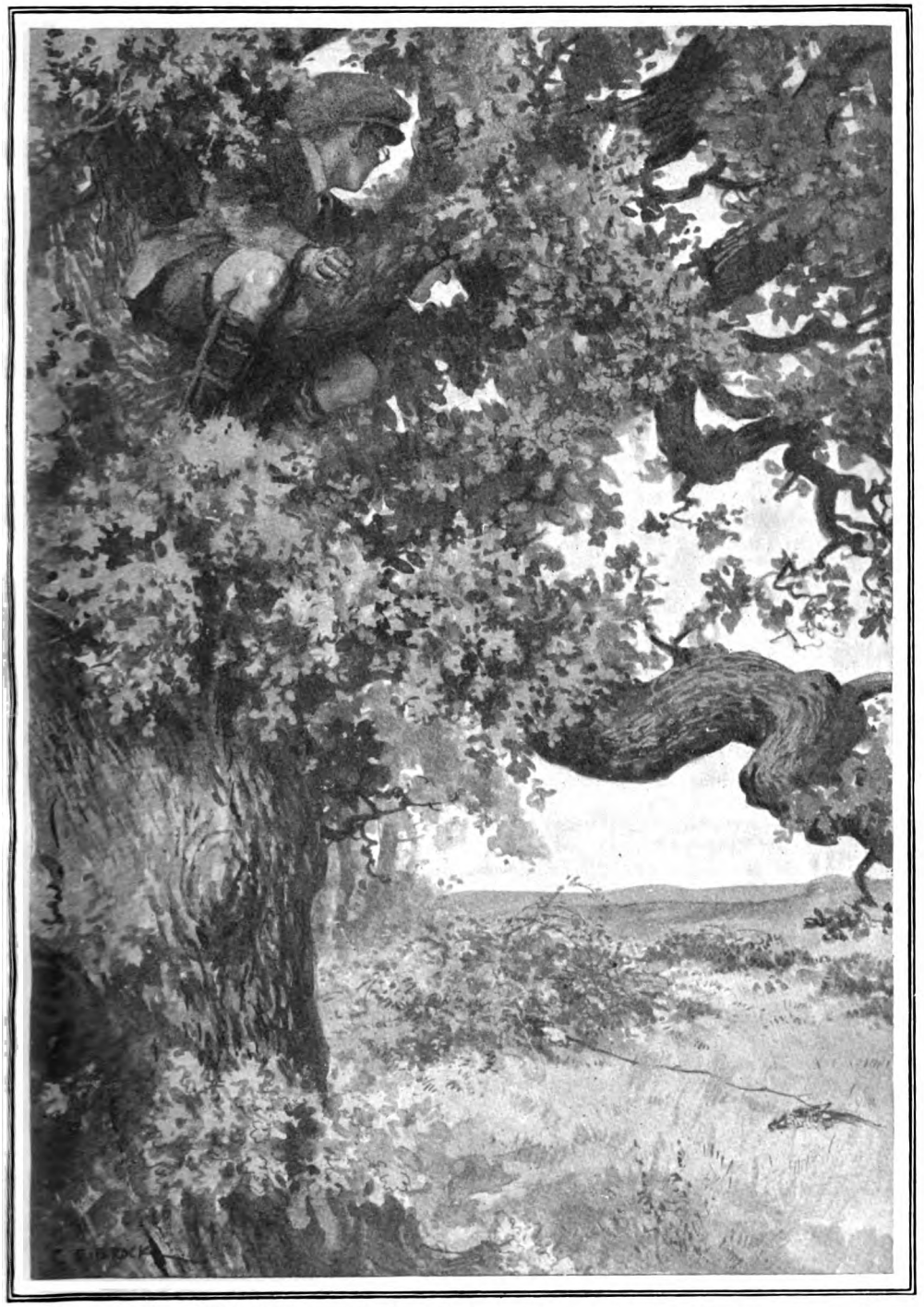
"I beg your pardon," he said. "You—you came out so quickly."

She was really rather overpowering, looming over him like a steep hill. Her hard eyes took him in swiftly.

"Well, whacha want?" she repeated.

"I—I've come over from Downsmore to see Mr. Packer's sister," he began, and got no farther.

"Oh, you have? Well, I'm her. And you



Intent and watchful, Nelson waited. A long arm was thrust out from a clump of brambles, and a very long hooked stick drew the pheasant quietly back to cover.

oughta been hours ago. I expected you first thing 's'morning!"

She glanced at his hands.

"And you've brought nothing! Ha! Tell Joe Packer from me he's a untrusting hound! He said he'd send no more till he had the money for the last lot, but I never thought the stupid idiot meant it!" she half shouted.

She was evidently a very angry woman and one difficult to please.

"Excuse me, but are you Mr. Packer's *only* sister?" asked Nelson, dubiously.

"Who else should I be?" she barked at him, and produced from some mysterious pocket a dirty envelope.

"Here, take it, and mind don't lose it! There's two pound there!" she said, violently. "And mind go straight back to Joe Packer with it and tell him that if he don't send on some more he-knows-what at once I'll come over and knock his head off! Get on with yuh, now! Don't hang about staring!"

Nelson raised his cap again, deeply shocked, and went without delay.

So this was Mr. Packer's weak sister—this frowsy but terrible Amazon who chased her husband out of the house as one might chase chickens!

Nelson almost shivered.

But his awed repugnance disappeared in a wave of mild anger as he realized how Mr. Packer had deceived him.

For years the alleged naturalist had fostered, encouraged, and traded on the sympathy of Nelson on account of his Weak Sister.

He had submitted to a stringency from Mr. Packer in their various small transactions which he would not have stood from anyone else. Why, he had sold his middle-sized pole-cat ferret for the ridiculous sum of two shillings simply because Mr. Packer claimed to be unable to pay more on account of having to buy some custards and port wine and iron tonic for his sister. And he had given Mr. Packer things for her which he could ill spare—mince pies, a slab of birthday cake, several of his young rabbits, and, once, a hot doughnut!

And now he had discovered that she wasn't very weak at all. Not only was she immensely strong and formidable, but she was the person to whom Mr. Packer deftly passed on the stolen eggs he acquired probably from Partridge Johnson.

"Why, they are *all* thieves!" said Nelson, shocked again. It was not difficult for a boy of his mentality to see that her vile temper had swamped her caution or cunning. She had evidently mistaken him for an expected messenger from Mr Packer.

That was quite clear, he reflected, as he sat in the homeward-bound bus.

He gathered that the unworthy Mr. Packer had not been paid for the last consignment of ill-gotten eggs, had declined to send more until he was paid, and had written to say he would be sending over that day for the money.

Yes, that was perfectly clear to Nelson.

He sat so quietly, thinking over the matter, that a dear old lady with a large basket thought he was quite the best-behaved little fellow she had ever seen, and offered him a bun—presumably to prove it. Not to hurt her feelings, Nelson politely accepted the bun. But he ate it as absent-mindedly as a boy can eat a bun—and the more he pondered the black ingratitude of Mr. Packer the more his red hair seemed to bristle, the brighter his greenish-grey eyes grew, and the farther the oval chin—mother's—stuck out.

Nelson was angry. But only those who knew him best would have guessed it, for he was a self-contained youth who consumed his own smoke.

He reached home just in time for a very fair tea, after which he vanished again.

Brother August, hunting earnestly, with threats upon his lips and menace in his eye, for his small brother that he might constrain him into bowling diligently at the cricket net in order that August might improve his batting, did catch one glimpse of a small, lone, hurrying figure on the side of the downs. But it was half a mile away and heading rapidly for the cottage of good Mr. Watson, head gamekeeper to Sir Milner Bayliss.

IV.

IT was at precisely ten o'clock that night when Sir Milner Bayliss, engaged in discussing agriculture (in its relation to shooting) over a bottle or so of port with his friend and neighbour, Squire Chiddenham, was informed that his head keeper and a police sergeant from Downsmore requested audience.

They were granted it—in the gun-room, whither a few moments later Sir Milner and the Squire, having finished their port like decent Christian gentlemen, repaired.

It was an interesting assembly gathered together in that place—interesting and not small. It included the police sergeant, looking highly efficient; a police constable, looking thirsty; worthy Mr. Watson, head gamekeeper, frankly beaming; an assistant gamekeeper, trying hard to look like one who really has been of assistance; a depressed, chinless gentleman of hang-dog and bankrupt appearance, Mr. Packer to wit; a long, lean, leathery, gipsy-like person, with a scowling

brow, a cruel mouth, and ugly eyes of a very truculent aspect—Mr. Partridge Johnson.

Somewhat detached from this picturesque surprise party, gazing with intent interest at Mr. Johnson, was Nelson Rodney Drake Chiddenham, hugging closely into his bosom a queer bundle of reddish wool with a quaint face, long pendulous ears, and solemn brown eyes.

"Nelson!" said the Squire, really surprised.

"Yes, sir," corroborated Nelson—adding no further information.

His small, slim body was stiff like that of one very excited but determined not to show it.

Solemnly Sir Milner and the Squire seated themselves.

"Well?" said Sir Milner, looking at Mr. Watson, who glanced at the sergeant. But the sergeant, who, with his *aide*, seemed loath to allow his attention to wander from Mr. Partridge Johnson, graciously waved Mr. Watson on.

Mr. Watson cleared his throat, and beaming upon all before him, made his report.

"No need to tell the Squire and you, Sir Milner, how we been robbed of pheasant eggs this season," he stated. "But we 'ave been so—'eavily. Nigh a hundred pounds' worth, I reckon it. And a lot of wild hen birds. Seen their feathers with my own eyes!"

Partridge Johnson jerked restlessly.

"Now, my lad—now, now," growled the sergeant.

"Certain information came to my yers 's'evening," continued Mr. Watson, his red face shining, "and I consulted the sergeant concerning the same and—we took——"

"Steps," chimed in the sergeant.

"Steps," agreed Mr. Watson. "Five of us waited, tucked out o' sight, near Packer's shop down in the town. Bimeby here comes along Partridge Johnson with a basket——"

"Basket o' watercress," snarled Partridge, and was hushed to silence by the sergeant.

"Carrying a basket," resumed Mr. Watson, imperturbably. "He goes into Packer's and we all sort of goes in after him. In the inside room Partridge and Packer were engaged in taking pheasant eggs from the basket and laying 'em in egg-boxes. Five of us seen it—and I've got the eggs here in the same basket."

"It's a lie!" observed Mr. Johnson, violently.

"The sergeant took 'em both in charge, and here we be, Sir Milner. Partridge struck the policeman in the eye"

"It's a lie!" stated Mr. Johnson.

They all looked at the policeman. His left eye was like an angry sunset.

Sir Milner and the Squire glanced at each other. Both were magistrates.

"Them eggs come off our land, sir," summed up Mr. Watson, "like a lot of others that Partridge has stolen and sold to Packer, who passes 'em on to someone else!"

"It's a lie!" commented Mr. Johnson, monotonously. "Them eggs come out of two pheasants' nests I found at the bottom o' my garden. I got a right to sell my own pheasants' eggs, ain't I?"

"Certainly, Johnson—if they are your own," agreed Sir Milner. "Can you prove these are yours?"

Partridge grinned sourly.

"I don't have to prove that! *You* gotta do the proving. Prove they ain't my eggs!"

Sir Milner glared, and did intricate things with his eyebrows.

"Any proof, Watson? Or you, Sergeant?" he inquired.

"Plenty proofs," said Mr. Watson, comfortably. "Perhaps mebbe Mast' Chiddenham here would speak?"

"Nelson?" said his father.

"You, my boy?" Sir Milner disentangled his fierce eyebrows.

"It's a lie," reiterated Mr. Johnson, mechanically.

"What do you know about this, Nelson, my boy?"

NELSON stepped stiffly into the limelight, pale with excitement, but quiet. They listened raptly as he told them how he had witnessed the ravishment of the nests and the murder of the birds that morning.

"You seed me?" demanded Mr. Johnson, savagely.

"Yes!"

"Seed *me* kill a pore, harmless bird what never done me no harm? It's a lie!"

"Excuse me, but I saw the nests of eggs—eight eggs in each. I saw your hat in the cover, and I saw you scrape a dead pheasant out of sight with a hooked stick," said Nelson. He stooped and opened the basket, turning to his father and Sir Milner.

"And these are the same eggs as those I saw in the nests!"

"It's a lie!" shouted Mr. Johnson, savagely. "Prove it!"

"Yes," said Nelson. "I marked every egg in the nests just before you stole them—I put a little N—N for Nelson—in pencil on them!"

"*Hah!*" exploded Sir Milner, suddenly. "Are these eggs marked with an N for Nelson, hey, sergeant?"

"Sixteen of them are, sir!" stated the

sergeant, and Mr. Watson handed half-a-dozen samples.

"It's a lie," snarled Partridge Johnson, glaring malevolently at Nelson.

Nelson flushed as he stared steadily at the evildoer.

It was weak, and it sounded weak—weaker, even, than his sister.

Sir Milner heard him out, then turned confidently to Nelson.

"What's the truth of it, Nelson, my boy?"

"I suppose you'll say it's a lie if I said that you killed my dog, Dusty!" he rapped out, shrilly.

"Not me," bellowed Mr. Johnson. "I killed the tyke, and I glories in it!"

"You will probably do most of your glorying in jail for a few months, my man!" snapped Sir Milner, nodding to the sergeant. "Take him out!"

Mr. Johnson disappeared scufflingly with those who had sought his company so long and earnestly—the police.

It was Mr. Packer's turn.

Accused of long being a receiver and disposer of stolen pheasant eggs, the "naturalist" stated that twice Mr. Johnson had brought him eggs which Partridge claimed to have found in his own garden. Believing him, he had purchased the eggs with the intention of blowing and selling them to egg collectors.

"I suppose you'll say it's a lie if I Nelson rapped out, shrilly. "Not the tyke, and I

Nelson hesitated for the first time, fingering the fatal letter in his pocket—given to him by the weak sister that afternoon.

His glance met that of the pallid Mr. Packer—whose brown eyes were fast on Nelson, and in that queer, pleading look was something the boy had seen before.

"Why—why, his eyes look just like Dusty's used to look!" said Nelson, deep within himself. "I—don't want to hurt

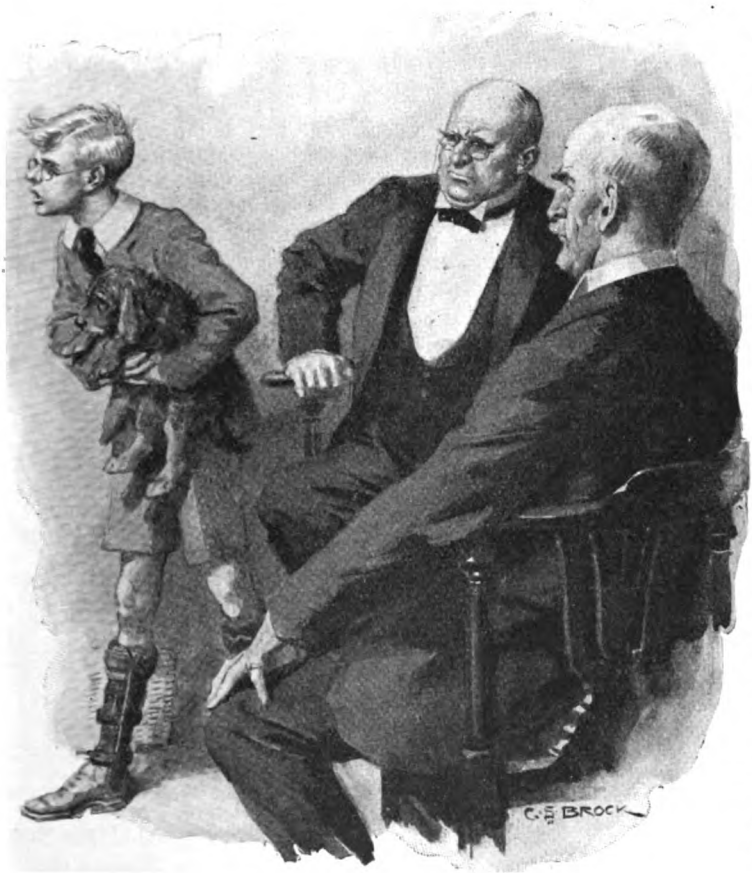
anybody who looks like Dusty used to look!"

He drew a big breath, and faced the two presences before him.

"No, sir," said Nelson, blushing to the roots of his permanently-blushing hair. "I haven't any proofs against Mr. Packer!"

Sir Milner sighed.

"There will be no summons against you, Packer," he said. "You can go—but be



said that you killed my dog, Dusty!" me," bellowed Mr. Johnson. "I killed glories in it!"

very careful, my man—ve-ry careful indeed—in future!"

Mr. Packer went swiftly. It was but a humble home to which he went, but he would be glad to get there. And it was far, far more home-like than the bourne whither Partridge Johnson had already been scuffled.

"Nelson has his head screwed on right," said Sir Milner, flatly, a few moments later in the dining-room. "This is a very friendly, very neighbourly turn you've done me, Nelson, my boy!"

But Nelson was looking at his father—that silent, twinkle-eyed person whom he suspected of wisdom and uncannily penetrating understanding. His eyes were twinkling now as he studied his youngest son.

The deep voice spoke.

"What is it, old man? Out with it."

Nelson gulped a little, clutching the blood-hound-setter so that it grunted an infantile grunt.

"It wasn't true, sir!"

He turned impulsively to Sir Milner.

"Will you let Mr. Packer off this time, sir, if I tell the truth?" he asked, eagerly. "You see, he's—been a friend of mine."

Sir Milner nodded without hesitation.

And then Nelson told all—producing and handing over the letter received from the weak sister. He watched them—anxiously, for, after all, they were Powers.

But his father's eyes were still twinkling as the letter incriminating Mr. Packer beyond hope was folded away—though Sir Milner's face was inscrutable.

"So you lied for him, hey, my boy? Because he was once a friend of yours?" said Sir Milner, in an odd, musing sort of voice.

"Yes, sir," admitted Nelson, ashamedly.

"Hum! Come here, Nelson!"

Slowly, Nelson went.

"Shake hands, my boy!"

They shook hands. Sir Milner's eyes were very wistful. He turned to the Squire, still holding Nelson's hand.

"I look back along the vista of my years, Chiddenham, and I see myself a—bit of a boy dodging about. But I fear he—somehow—he wasn't quite the white man this boy is!" he said, and shook his great head.

He fixed Nelson with his hard eyes.

"You'd like a drop of something to drink, eh, Nelson? Come, now—a—um—bottle of nice gassy ginger-beer, hey, now?"

Nelson did not deny it, and so Sir Milner rang for the beverage.

"And, Nelson," he went on, "we'll not haggle about things, I think. I must make handsome acknowledgment—eh, yes? You've got a queer sort of a cross-bred there. He may turn out well, but I like to see a thoroughbred with a thoroughbred. So you can have Kitty Kilkee! Yes, boy, I mean it. She's yours!"

Nelson's father moved—then sat still, saying nothing, watching Nelson.

Nelson pondered.

Kitty Kilkee—Champion Kitty Kilkee—the finest red setter in the South, perhaps the whole of England! His—for the taking! And he knew how proud Sir Milner was of her! In the thrill of it all, he gripped the baby cross-bred over-hard and again it grunted an infantile grunt, snuggling closer under his upper arm. Nelson looked down at the queer little beast—that knew, by virtue of its mixed blood, so much already, and would learn so much more.

At last, rather slowly, he shook his head.

"Thank you, Sir Milner," said Nelson. "It is *awfully* kind—but if you are *sure* you don't mind, I think I will stick to—this one. I want to train him myself—and see what I can make of him. I wouldn't have time for Kitty Kilkee as well. I hope you don't mind, sir!"

It seemed to the anxious Nelson that Sir Milner was a long time answering.

But when he did he said the right thing—you could always trust Sir Milner Bayliss for that, thought Nelson.

"Ah, yes—I forgot, my boy. I might have known. You've got rather a weakness for sticking to your friends! No, I don't mind, Nelson. And here's the—um—ginger-beer."

Nelson limped home in the moonlight with his father. It was a glorious walk, and Nelson never quite forgot the thrill he experienced at his parent's quiet, almost casual commendation of his behaviour that night.

"Don't quite know where you get your ideas, Nelson, but just go on as you're going. You won't come to much harm. Seems a bit rough sometimes, old man, perhaps? You see, there's such a lot of us at home." There was the ghost of apology in the deep voice. "Aug shakes you up sometimes—eh? Never mind, he'll learn it isn't much of a business, that. No—not on the whole. It's very much like pups, Nelson—some learn to play the game quicker than the others. That's about what it amounts to, old chap."

Nelson did not quite understand exactly all the Squire meant—but it sounded about right. So he agreed.

ACROSTICS.

OUR twenty-seventh series of acrostics begins with No. 133, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 133.

THE first is read, the last are guessed,
And both should be of interest.

The page lies open to your eyes:
Take as your motto: Enter—prize.

1. One of a band of sisters nine.
2. Last letter must small hill resign.
3. A circle runs the earth around.
4. Two rhyming words, in London found.
5. A game by no means free from faults.
6. A wall protects from foes' assaults.
7. A friend in France please indicate.
8. Sermon can act as opiate.
9. Newfoundlands, mongrels, mastiffs, curs,
   Poms, poodles, spaniels, terriers.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 133 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on August 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, and (except in the case of postcards) nothing else. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

One alternative answer may be sent to each light.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 132.

1. S	or	E
2. E	quilatera	L
3. M	ard	I
4. I	cywit	Z
5. R	os	A
6. A	dver	B
7. M	orasthit	E
8. I	nterme n	T
9. S	leig	H

NOTES.—Light 1. Mysore, the Indian gold mine. 3. Lundy: *Lundi, Mardi*, in France. 4. The Ingoldsby Legends, The Blasphemer's Warning. 5. Rosa Bonheur. 7. Mica; Micah, the first verse. 8. Grave, funeral; interm. time—(acc)ent; grave accent. 9. Winter sports; Lord Roberts of Waterford and Kandahar, Frederick Sleigh Roberts.

IS THERE A SHERLOCK HOLMES AMONG OUR READERS? HERE IS A CHANCE FOR HIM.

THE TERRIBLE AUNT

By

DAVID DEVANT

ILLUSTRATED BY A. BAILEY

Mr. David Devant, the great illusionist, has written a problem story for "The Strand Magazine." We shall publish his solution of the mystery in due course, but in the meantime we invite our readers to guess how the young couple contrived to make their plans for eloping without being discovered by the vigilant Aunt Jane. Clues to the secret are given in the story. The method employed is one which will be of interest to any young couple whose circumstances are similar to those of Margaret and Arthur at the beginning of the story. We shall be pleased to publish—and pay for—the solution that comes nearest to Mr. Devant's.

"NOTHING for you, miss," said the postman, handing two bulky circulars through the open window.

Margaret presented the circulars to Aunt Jane, who stretched out a bony, blue-veined hand to receive them. Circulars of any kind—catalogues, price lists, even charity appeals—were Aunt Jane's delight. She preferred sale catalogues, with coloured illustrations, to mere humdrum lists of prices, and those which came to her house without an invitation were more precious in her eyes than those sent at her request.

One of the circulars which her niece had given her was an illustrated list from a furniture shop—quite a sumptuous little volume.

Aunt Jane turned the pages eagerly and forgot her breakfast. How nice it would be, she thought, to refurnish her house with the aid of that beautiful shop, and then she turned to the coloured pictures of carpets and broke the Tenth Commandment again. The drawing-room needed a new carpet. Would it be possible to——

She glanced at the prices and concluded that it would not. With a sigh she went on to the pictures of coal-scuttles, but these were less alluring than the carpets, and she returned to the pictures of dining-room chairs. Her own chairs, she was sure, were a disgrace to any self-respecting dining-room, and if—— But again she was baffled. The prices were exorbitant.

She picked up the other catalogue—from Widgley's Stores. A description of an entirely new kind of cleaner, one in which all the virtues of all other cleaners had been cleverly combined, and from which all the vices of other cleaners had been eliminated, convinced her that the writer was a kindly man, whose mission in life was to lessen the troubles of weary housekeepers. The act of using one of these cleaners was so pleasurable that it solved the servant problem.

Aunt Jane thought it was very kind of the man to say that. He had doubtless solved his own servant problem by the aid of one of his own cleaners, and——

"Auntie!"

Aunt Jane looked up quickly. The vision of a large and well-appointed house, with six servants using six perfect cleaners all at once, and smiling with sheer joy at their work, suddenly vanished.

Margaret's face was white; her right hand, holding a folded newspaper, trembled.

"Fire, Auntie!" she gasped. "Fire at Bude Street Mansions—the whole place burnt out—last night—fire still burning—immense damage—and——"

"Any loss of life?" asked Aunt Jane. Her tone implied just what she intended.

"This does not really interest me, but I may as well know."

"Doesn't say, Auntie. This is—is too——"

"Your tea's getting cold, Margaret. Perhaps there's something in the Stop Press—that little white space in the paper where they put the latest news."

Margaret folded the paper quickly, and read: "Bude Street Fire. Feared loss of three lives."

She dropped the paper and walked slowly from the room. Aunt Jane shrugged her shoulders. For the fraction of a second she felt tempted to find her niece and to suggest that they should go off at once in a taxi to Bude Street, but the temptation to be kind passed. After all, she had not been responsible for the fire, but she felt secretly glad that there had been a fire. If the place was really burnt out, then he—Arthur Weston—could no longer be living there, and as Margaret did not know where he was living, she could not possibly write to him. And he would not write to Margaret because she—Aunt Jane—had forbidden that, and——

A double knock on the door. Aunt Jane took the telegram through the open window; as she tore it open she heard her niece running downstairs and into the room.

"What is it, Auntie? Is it from him?"

Aunt Jane frowned as she handed the telegram to her niece, who read:—

"*Quite well thank you water very useful Arthur.*"

"This is to be the last time," snapped Aunt Jane. "I told him that I absolutely forbade him to write to you or communicate with you in any way. I suppose I must consider the fire was some excuse for a wire, but I forbid you to answer it or to hear from him again. So far as you are concerned, Margaret, there is no such man as Arthur Weston. He has broken his promise already by wiring, but——"

"The wire is addressed to you, Auntie, so you see he didn't break his promise; besides, a wire isn't a letter, and—well, it isn't, is it?"

"Listen, my dear, listen!" said Aunt Jane, severely. "Sit down and let us have a final understanding about this matter."

"I thought we had had one already, Auntie," said Margaret, dropping into a chair.

"And I thought so, too, Margaret, but he is evidently in your mind, and I—I don't like it. I object to Mr. Weston, and I'm quite certain that if your poor father were alive he would agree with me that Mr. Weston is a most undesirable sort of man."

"And I'm quite certain that you are wrong there, Auntie. Now, do be reasonable, please. What is it really that you object to?"

"His mode of living generally—far too flighty. A man who carries a pack of cards about with him must——"

"My dear Auntie, Arthur—Mr. Weston—explained that. You know quite well that he's a most excellent amateur conjurer, and that on the day when he accidentally took the pack of cards from his pocket he had been for a conjuring lesson to Mr. David Devant. You can write and ask Mr. Devant yourself. There is no harm in conjuring."

"I'm not so sure," said Aunt Jane. "To ask me to believe that a man who practises card tricks morning, noon, and night isn't learning to be a card-sharper is—well, it's asking too much, that's all."

"You are most unjust, Auntie."

"Nothing of the kind, Margaret. I am acting for your good, and one day you will be thankful to me. Now, I don't wish to discuss this matter any further; it is finished. I will take very good care that you receive no communication of any kind from this man, either directly or indirectly, and I forbid you to write to him—but there, since Bude Street Mansions have been burnt out you can't write to him because you don't know his address. I've no doubt in my own mind that he was directly responsible for the fire—probably smoking in bed, or engaged in some drunken spree——"

"You've no right to say anything of the kind, Auntie."

"Then he shouldn't make jokes about water being useful,'" said Aunt Jane. "I read that to mean that for a wonder he was a teetotaller last night and that——"

"Nonsense, Auntie; you know quite well that that was only just a little joke about the water used to put out the fire. The firemen always swamp the place—they have to. I do think you're most unkind and most unreasonable."

"Then I shall continue to be both," said Aunt Jane; "and now I'm going to weed the garden."

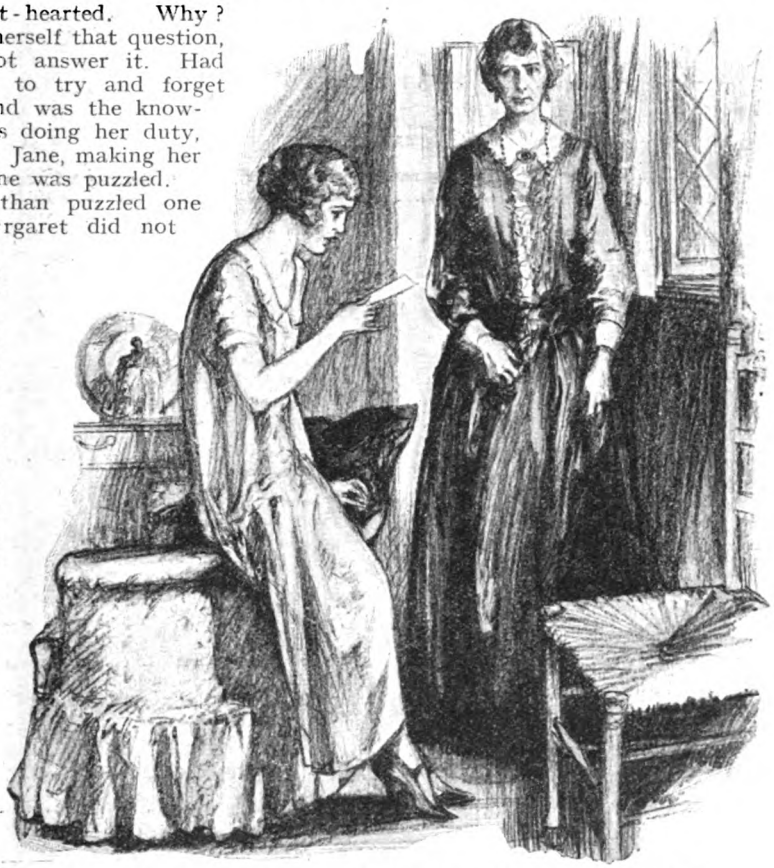
FOR the next few weeks Aunt Jane did not allow her niece to go out of her sight when they were out of doors, and she (Aunt Jane) was always at home when the postman called and examined all the letters. They knew no one who could possibly be acting as "postman" between Arthur Weston and Margaret, and therefore she was quite certain that her orders had been obeyed and that the young man and her niece had not written to each other.

And yet Aunt Jane was not entirely happy; somehow, she did not feel quite certain that her niece was not deceiving her. At times Margaret was most un-

accountably light-hearted. Why? Aunt Jane asked herself that question, but she could not answer it. Had Margaret resolved to try and forget Arthur Weston, and was the knowledge that she was doing her duty, according to Aunt Jane, making her happy? Aunt Jane was puzzled.

She was more than puzzled one morning when Margaret did not come down to breakfast. Aunt Jane called to her without getting a reply, then she went to Margaret's room. Margaret was not there. A note pinned on the pillow informed Aunt Jane that her niece had left the house and would write in a few days.

Aunt Jane's first impulse was to send for a policeman, but she disliked publicity, and so she contented herself with going out and making a few inquiries, which led to nothing. No one had seen Margaret leaving the house.



Aunt Jane frowned as she handed the telegram to her niece.

A letter came from Margaret in the evening. She was quite well and Aunt Jane was not to worry. A similar letter came every day for five days, and then Aunt Jane received a letter signed "Your affectionate niece, Margaret Weston."

Aunt Jane was furious for five minutes, and then she laughed at herself.

"After all," she pondered, "I suppose that when two young people have made up their minds that they won't be kept apart—well, they won't be."

And so when Margaret and her husband came to the house Aunt Jane was all smiles.

"But there is one thing I don't understand," she said, after she had startled her niece's husband by kissing him affectionately on both cheeks, "and that is—how did you manage to make your little plans without my knowing about them? I'm quite certain that no letter came for Margaret, and as she didn't know your address—well, how did you do it?"

"Ah, Miss Haynes," said Arthur, "that's our little secret. You see, I hadn't been an amateur conjurer for nothing. When you start to learn conjuring you pick up all sorts of little dodges. It was so simple to—to do what I wanted."

"I think you ought to tell me," said Aunt Jane. "I'm really most curious to know how I was beaten."

"But we couldn't tell you that, Miss Haynes, could we, Margaret?"

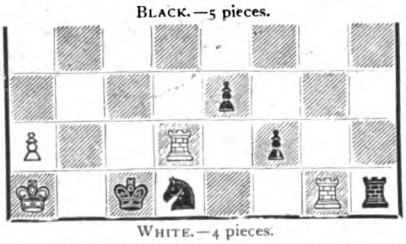
"We needn't keep it a secret any longer, dear," said Margaret.

"I should certainly advise you not to keep it a secret," said Aunt Jane, "because if you do I shall have many sleepless nights, trying to think it out. And, you know," she added, playfully, "we aunts can be very useful at times to nieces and nephews who are really nice. Come, now, how did you manage to make all your plans in secret?"

"Nothing simpler," said Arthur. "To begin with I——"

PERPLEXITIES. By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

712.—AN AMUSING CHESS PUZZLE.



HERE is a curious little chess puzzle by Mr. J. Morrow. Black has rashly undertaken to queen one of his pawns at any price. It does not matter if it be immediately taken, the fact of his making a queen achieves success. How is White to prevent Black from getting a queen? It is White's turn to play, and he can do it. The upper half of the board is omitted to save space.

713.—NEW WORD CHAIN.

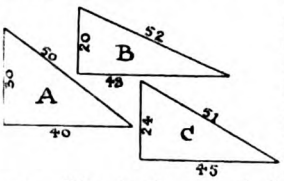
WHAT is the longest chain of words that you can make in this way:—

BAG
AGE
GEM
EMU
MUG

You thus cut off the head of each successive word and add a tail to form a new word. No word may be repeated in the chain. We will not be too strict over the character of the words, but allow proper names, Christian names with their abbreviations, such as TOM and NED, and contracted words like E'ER. I have just constructed such a chain of forty-three words, which I will give. Perhaps the reader can do better.

714.—EQUAL PERIMETERS.

RATIONAL right-angled triangles have been a fascinating subject for study since the time of Pythagoras, before the Christian era. Every schoolboy knows that the sides of these, generally expressed in whole numbers, are such that the square of the hypotenuse is exactly equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Thus, in the case of diagram A, the square of 30 (900), added to the square of 40 (1600), is the square of 50 (2500), and similarly with B and C. It will be found that the three triangles shown have each the same perimeter. That is the three sides in every case add up to 120. Now, can you find six rational right-angled triangles each with a common perimeter, and the smallest possible? It is not a difficult puzzle like my "Four Princes," that once appeared in these pages, in which you had to find four such triangles of equal *area*.



Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

707.—A PROHIBITION POSER.

FIRST fill and waste the 7-quart measure 14 times and you will have thrown away 98 and leave 22 qts. in the barrel in 28 transactions. (Filling and emptying are two transactions.) Then, fill 7-qt.; fill 5-qt. from 7-qt., leaving 2 in 7-qt.; empty 5-qt.; transfer 2 from 7-qt. to 5-qt.; fill 7-qt.; fill up 5-qt. from 7-qt., leaving 4 in 7-qt.; empty 5-qt.; transfer 4 to 5-qt.; fill 7-qt.; fill up 5-qt. from 7-qt., leaving 6 in 7-qt.; empty 5-qt.; fill 5-qt. from 7-qt., leaving 1 in 7-qt.; empty 5-qt., leaving 1 in 7-qt.; draw off remaining 1 qt. from barrel into 5-qt., and the thing is done in 14 more transactions, making, with the 28 above, 42 transactions. If you start by wasting 104 and leaving 16 in barrel, these 16 can be dealt with in only 11 transactions, but the 104 require 32 in the wasting (12 times 7 and 4 times 5 is the quickest way), so that this method would involve 43 transactions—one more than the way I have shown.

708.—VERBAL ARITHMETIC.

Addition.	Subtraction.
9567	12780
1085	6231
10652	6549

Multiplication.	Division.
138	237)56169(237
138	474
19044	876
	711
	1659
	1659

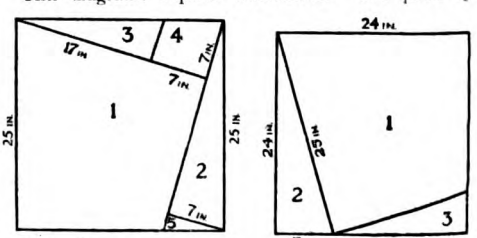
There are a few alternative solutions, but in bringing in the words this was sometimes almost inevitable.

709.—SCORING AT BILLIARDS.

THE highest score in two consecutive shots is 18. Many will give the answer as 16. (1st)—Cannon (2), pot the white (2), pot the red (3), and in off red (3), making 10. 2nd—Pot the red (3) and in off red (3), making 6. Total for two shots 16. But the first shot should leave the white up, scoring 8 only, after which the 10 shot can be made. Total 18.

710.—THE SQUARES OF VENEER.

THE diagrams explain themselves. The piece 25



by 25 is cut into five parts that fit together and form two squares 24 by 24 and 7 by 7 respectively.

711.—A CHARADE.

THE word is SINCERE. S in (my *first*), C (my *next*), ERE (my *remainder*).

Q.Q."—A NEW DETECTIVE

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

THE HUMOUR OF WEMBLE

Who says "Hovis"?

THERE'S a scamper of hurrying young feet when HOVIS makes its appearance.

t
Ch
TO
have
words,
better.

HOVIS

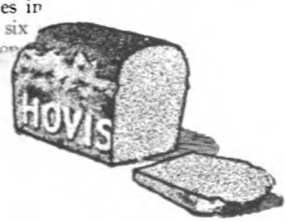
(Trade Mark)

RATIO
ing subjes made only from wheat, like
before the ite bread, but with this
portant difference: it con-
s added quantities of the
l "germ" which consti-
s its most vitalising part.

sides. Thus
of 30 (9
(1600), is
with B and C
shown have
three sides in
you find six
a common
It is
that
to f

ur Baker Bakes it.

OVIS LTD., MACCLESFIELD.



The SECRET of A HAPPY HOME

"This is the store cupboard."
"Of course one doesn't have one nowadays—(there isn't room for them in modern houses—even if you can get a house !)
"But that doesn't matter because nobody *stores*

CLARNICO
LILY BRAZILS

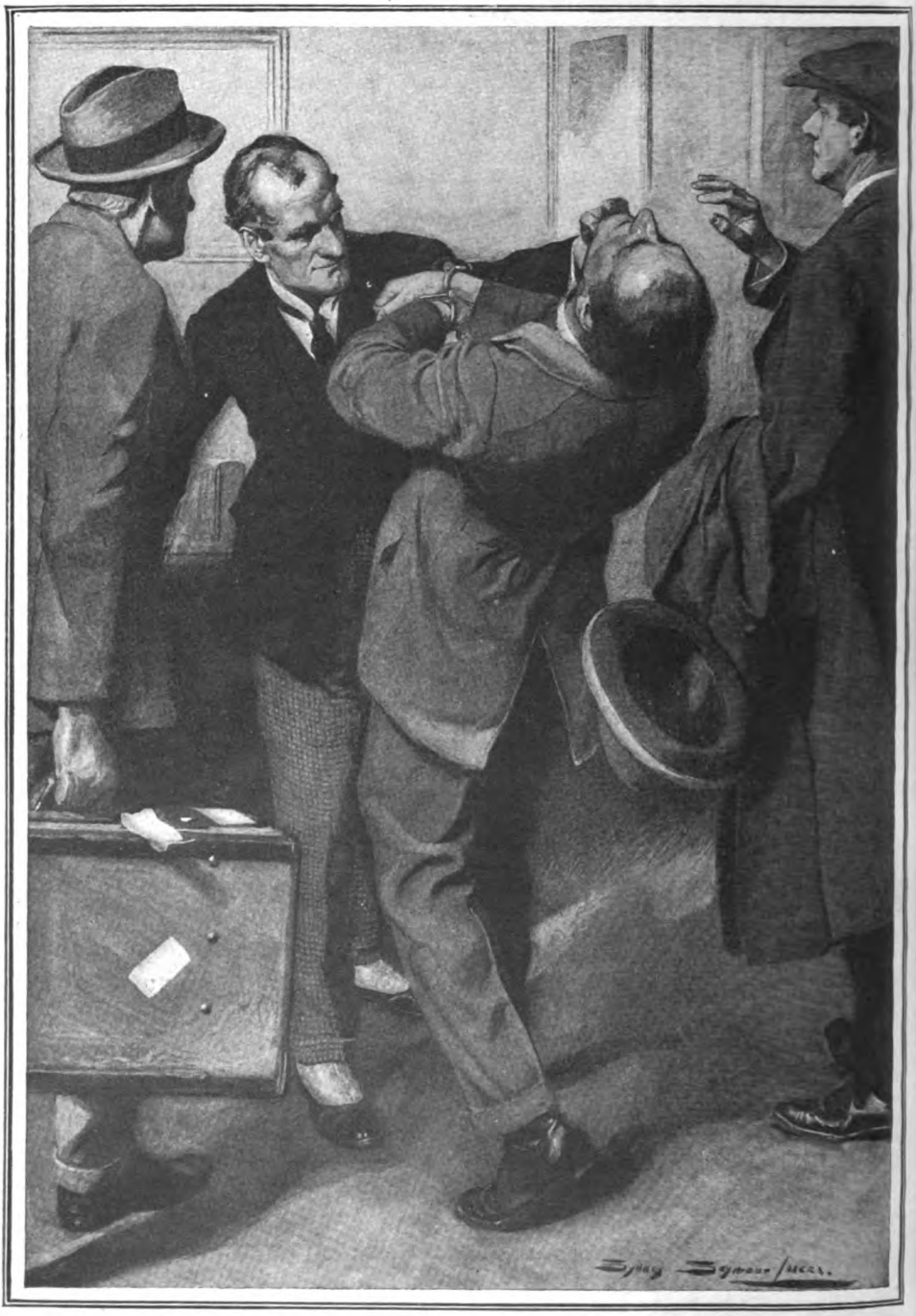
(I should smile !) They *eat* them . . . . and eat them . . . . AND eat them ! . . . .
And *then* some more !
Sugar-butter-cream —and Brazil nuts !"
"And only 8d. a quarter !!"
Plain or covered in choice chocolate.

CLARNICO *Lily* BRAZILS

CLARKE, NICKOLLS & COOMBS, LTD.,
Victoria Park, London.
Stand P.P. 630 (Palace of Industry), British Empire Exhibition, Wembley.

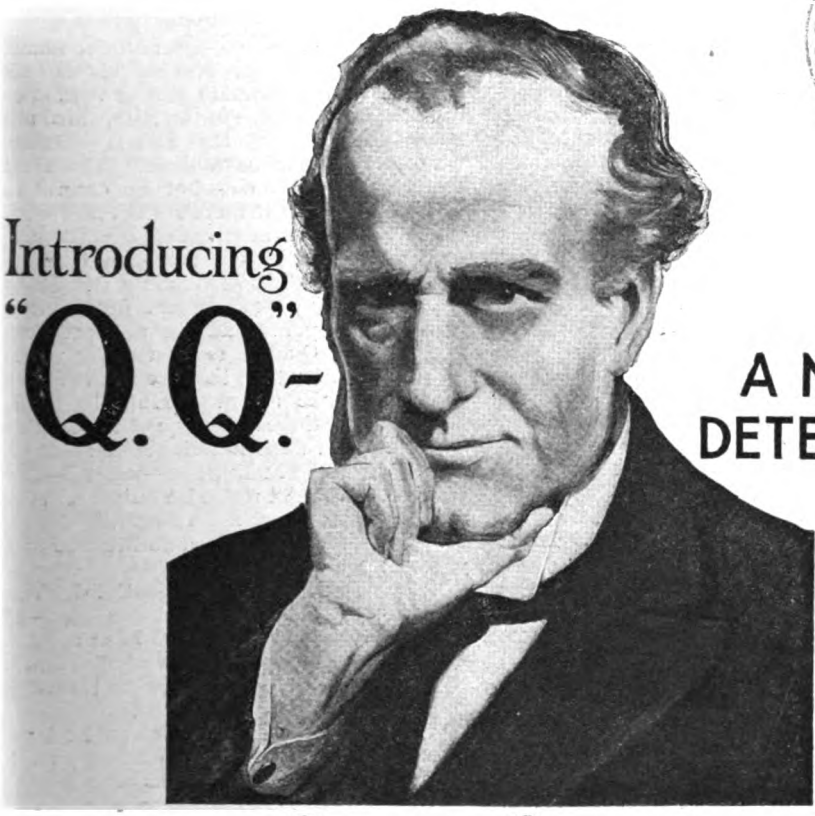
THE STRAND MAGAZINE

September, 1924.



QUENTIN QUAYNE'S FIST SHOT OUT, STRAIGHT AT THE MAN'S JAW. THE FELLOW WENT DOWN LIKE A LOG.

(*See page 230.*)



No. 1—THE MYSTERY OF THE DUKE of BERRISFORD

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY
S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

THE uncomfortable sinking at the pit of my stomach was not entirely caused by the sudden upward shoot of the lift to the eighth floor of the building I had entered from Piccadilly Circus. It persisted when, after a step or two along the topmost corridor, I hesitated for a moment outside a mahogany door neatly lettered "The Q. Q. Agency." In fact, I felt almost sick. For me, it was the last throw of the dice. I did not need anyone to tell me that an ex-officer without a definite profession was a drug in the labour market. I knew it by bitter experience. And the only spectre of a profession even to which I could lay any claim was the fact that, after stopping a machine-gun bullet in Bourlon Wood, I had been transferred to the Intelligence Branch and employed, thanks to some fluency in foreign languages, on counter-espionage work. It was remembering this, and in desperation rather than with the faintest hope, that, with my last postage-stamp, I had written to the

Copyright, 1924, by F. Britten Austin.

Q. Q. Agency and asked if there was a chance of employment.

The chance was infinitesimal. I had never come into personal contact with the Q. Q. Agency, but I had heard enough whispers about it in my war-time Intelligence work to know that, modestly though it refrained from advertising itself to the general public, it was perhaps the most efficient private Intelligence Bureau in the world. I knew that official superiors, high above me on the topmost summits of the administrative Olympus, did not disdain to work in close connection with it. It was, if those whispers spoke truly, a bureau of highly-trained specialists presided over by a genius—the legendary Quentin Quayne himself. There was small probability that such an organization would recruit itself from casual applicants; it would pick and choose its own men. And even when, incredulous of my own eyes, I had read the letter making an appointment for ten-thirty that morning, I had jeered with bitter pessimism at myself.

NOW that I stood on the other side of that mahogany door, on the thick soft carpet of a large room, my eyes instinctively focused themselves upon the man who sat at a massive desk, islanded some way out into the room. He looked up at my entrance—a ruddy, clean-shaven face whose rounded, well-developed jaw was amply balanced by the breadth of the brow, hair that was definitely grey and rather thin, eyes whose glance was sharp, shrewd, and good-humoured, and a smile that opened over white and regular teeth. It was Mr. Quentin Quayne.

"Mr. Creighton?" The voice was unexpectedly pleasant.

My acknowledgment of the fact was all but obliterated by the sudden sharp ring of the telephone on his desk.

"Excuse me for a moment," he said, as he picked up the receiver and listened. "Gordon?—Yes?" He gestured me to an adjacent chair. I seated myself and, with a pumping heart, profited by this temporary diversion of his interest to study a little more closely the man who held, though he knew it not, the continuation of my existence in his hands.

The colloquy was short and sharp. "Good," he said into the telephone. "The lounge of the Ritz—third table from the entrance—and Stevenson is wearing a white rose in his buttonhole? Right! We'll have him in five minutes. Don't lose sight of him till it's all over."

He put back the receiver just long enough to break the connection, picked it up again, asked for a number.

"Hullo!" he called. "Is that Sebright?—Quayne speaking. We've got your man for you, Sebright—yes—Dumonnier himself. You won't recognize him in his disguise, but he is at this moment sitting with one of my men in the lounge of the Ritz, third table from the entrance. My man is wearing a white rose in his buttonhole. You'll take them both, of course—but be careful not to hurt my chap if there's a scuffle. Your bird carries an automatic, by the way. And all the necessary evidence is in the office here if you'll send round for it. Right!—What?—Give your orders first and I'll hold on for you. Minutes are precious." Mr. Quentin Quayne sat patiently waiting for a moment or two, the receiver to his ear. Then he spoke again. "Hullo! Yes?—You've sent off the flying squad?—Good!—What did you want to talk about?—Oh?—What name?—The Duke of—what?—Duke of Berrisford. All right. You've sent him along? All right. I'll see him."

He put down the receiver and turned to me with a smile.

"That's Sebright of Scotland Yard. We've caught a prize bird for him—the police of two continents have been after the man for three months. We've found him for them. I had a theory—and it has turned out right." He smiled at me again.

"But the police get all the credit for it, I suppose?" I ventured, emboldened by the reassuring geniality of this confidence.

"'Acting on information received'——," he quoted the conventional formula at me with a twinkle in his shrewd eyes. I found myself decidedly liking Mr. Quentin Quayne. There was a magnetism about the man. "But we're not greedy for publicity. Quite the contrary. We obey the poet's precept, Mr. Creighton: 'Do good by stealth and blush to find it fame'—in fact, we should do considerably more than blush. We should be very angry—and to some purpose."

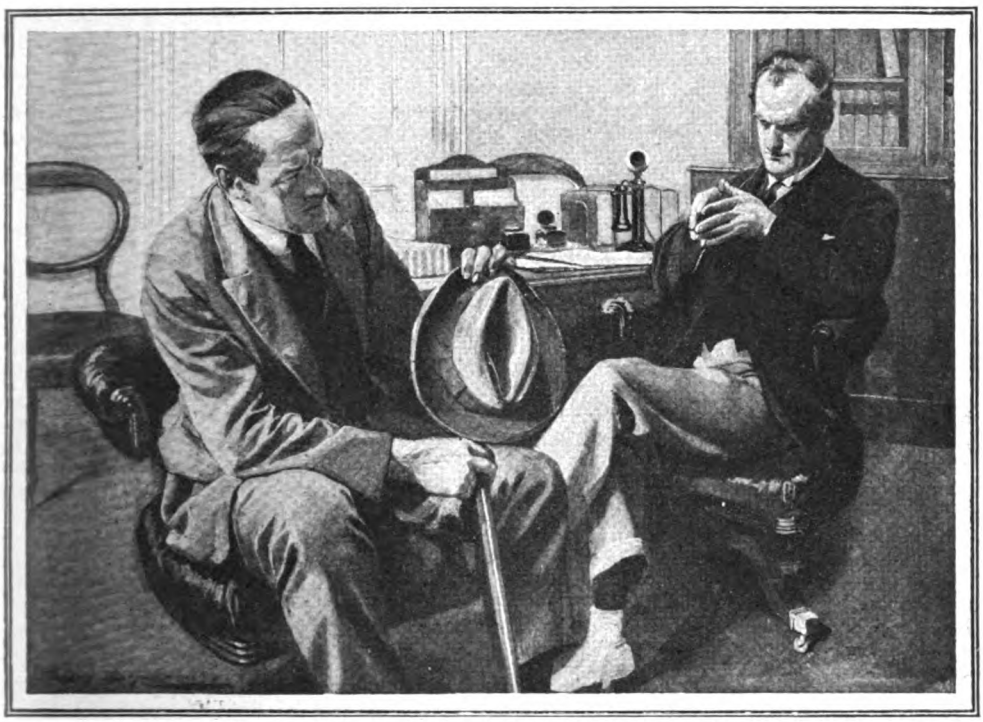
He smiled at me, and I suddenly had the distinct impression that I was being given my first lesson in the code Mr. Quentin Quayne laid down for his *employés*—and simultaneously I realized, with even greater distinctness, that those smiling eyes were probing as it were through the flesh and blood of the countenance I turned to them to the incorporeal soul of me underneath. Clear though was my conscience, the feeling was uncomfortable. It was a sort of psychic nakedness, highly disconcerting. One waited with an instinctive little dread, lest the smile should die out of those eyes. But the smile persisted, reassuringly.

"And now to your affairs, Mr. Creighton."

"I'm afraid you will find that I have small qualifications other than willingness and loyalty, Mr. Quayne," I said, desper-

ately. The memory of those searching eyes —they were harmlessly smiling now—abided in me; I was terrified of even appearing to pretend to qualities I did not possess.

He got up from his chair, and as he went across the room I was surprised to see that he was a much shorter man than he had appeared when sitting in his chair. The great breadth of his shoulders had given me the impression of a man over six feet in height; he was not more than five feet nine. He stopped at a cabinet on the opposite wall, opened a drawer, took out a *dossier*, came back with it to the desk, seated himself, and for a moment or two studied the papers he had fetched. He looked up at me sharply.



"You are the Creighton who caught out Waffenheim, the female-impersonator spy?" he asked. I admitted that I was.

"You are the Creighton who caught out Waffenheim, the female-impersonator spy, in May, 1918?" he asked.

I admitted that I was.

"H'm!" The little grunt was enigmatic. "We were on his track ourselves. You beat us by a short head. Not often that happens. First-rate. I think you'll find that desk convenient." He jerked his hand towards a desk across the room, at an angle from his own. "But first put back this jacket—under 'W'—in the cabinet there"

I took the jacket from him and stood staring at him, scarcely hearing that last sentence in the sudden surge of blood that beat in my ears—scarcely grasping the incredible. *Reprieve?* The room seemed to whirl round me.

Q. Q. turned his attention to some papers on his desk, as calmly as though he had just said the most ordinary thing in the world.

"You—you mean you engage me, sir?" I stammered.

He glanced up again sharply.

"My dear Mr. Creighton, I think I was sufficiently explicit. There's your desk. For the next few months you will co-operate in my personal work. I train my young men myself. And don't let me catch you thinking of suicide again."

I gasped—jerked out something unintelligible in my confusion. The man was uncanny.

Mr. Quayne smiled.

"I haven't time to give you the analysis now, Mr. Creighton—we're busy people in this office. Put that jacket back and sit down."

I obeyed, and then, for the first time, sat down in the seat that was to become so familiar to me.

There was a tap at the door, and a young woman entered. Mr. Quayne looked up at her.

"Ah, Veronica!" he said. "What is it?"

"This has just come in, Chief," she replied, in a quiet, efficient-sounding voice, as she handed him a typewritten letter headed—as I could just see from my desk—"*Compagnie Internationale des Wagon-Lits.*"

He scrutinized the document with a little frown of concentrated attention.

"Robbery on the Simplon-Orient," he said. "Looks like our old friend Markinovich, doesn't it? The old gang and the old methods. Telegraph full details to Watkins at Constantinople, Sergeantson at Belgrade, and Hammond at Milan."

"The telegrams are all ready," she replied.

"Good," he said. "Send them off at once. I don't think this is beyond the men on the spot. Anyway, we'll let them try their hand. Oh, Veronica," he added, as she moved away, "let me introduce our new recruit—Mr. Creighton."

She turned and looked at me. She was tall and dark, and, as I rose in politeness from my seat, I thought I had rarely seen a more beautiful woman or one more frigid. She regarded me with a cold detachment that was slightly disconcerting, and then, after just the faintest inclination of her head, resumed her way out of the room.

"That is Miss Satterthwaite," said Mr. Quayne, when she had closed the door behind her. "A very remarkable young woman. When in doubt, go to her, if I'm not available."

The telephone bell upon his desk rang as he spoke. He took up the receiver.

"Yes?—The Duke of Berrisford?—Show him in, please."

A MINUTE or so later the door opened and a clerk introduced a tall, thin man in morning-coat and white spats over his patent boots, who removed his silk hat as he entered.

"Mr. Quentin Quayne?" he said, in a somewhat high-pitched voice.

"Quite at your service," replied Mr. Quayne, genially, shaking hands with his visitor.

His Grace seated himself with the abrupt jerkiness of a man whose nerves are at strain. He was a man of between forty-five and fifty. Viewing him at close quarters, I could see that his somewhat bulbous eyes were bloodshot and the lower lip of a rather flaccid mouth was quivering under his drooping moustache and pointed beard. The grey-hued haggardness of his face was eloquent of lack of sleep.

Mr. Quentin Quayne settled himself back in his own chair. "And now, sir, what can I do for you?" he asked, with a smile. "I trust you do not mind the presence of my assistant?"

The Duke of Berrisford ignored my existence. For all answer, he extracted a folded paper from his breast-pocket. His long, aristocratically-white hand shook as he passed it across to Mr. Quayne. "I received that last night," he said, in a gasping voice.

Mr. Quayne opened it. On the sheet of paper was the life-size imprint in red ink of a human hand, and underneath, in crudely printed capitals, were the words "*In thirty-six hours—exit the Duke of Berrisford.*"

Q. Q.—I may as well begin to call him by the name by which all of us in the Q. Q. Agency thought of him, though we generally addressed him as "the Chief"—glanced up at his visitor.

"Do you attach any serious importance to this?" he asked.

"I do—I do indeed," replied the Duke. The earnestness in his voice was unmistakable.

Q. Q. contemplated the paper again sceptically.

"It looks to me like a silly schoolboy hoax," he said. "May I ask why you attach importance to it?"

"I—I can't tell you," stammered the Duke. "I—I can't explain—but I feel—I *feel*," he emphasized the word, "that it has a most sinister significance. I—I am afraid—terribly afraid—I could not sleep all last night."

"H'm!" Mr. Quentin Quayne's keen eyes rested for a moment on the Duke's pallid face, and I wondered what they read in it. "You have no specific reason for believing this to be a genuine threat from any quarter—a Terrorist organization, for example?"

"No. No specific reason—only—what shall I say?—an intuition—an instinctive feeling which is beyond reason. Mr. Quayne, I am frightened to the marrow of my bones! I have a presentiment which amounts almost to certainty that in a few hours I shall be no more." The tremulous sincerity in the man's voice impressed me not a little. There was something almost pathetic in his tone as he added: "But I am afraid you scoff at mere presentiments, Mr. Quayne."

Q. Q.'s face was impenetrable.

"I have too much experience to scoff at anything," he replied. "A presentiment may be founded on very good reasons which, for one cause or another, remain outside consciousness. May I ask if there is any idea—no matter how apparently unreasonable—which occurs spontaneously to

"Q. Q." contemplated the paper sceptically. "It looks to me like a silly schoolboy hoax," he said. "May I ask why you attach importance to it?"

you in association with the thought of this piece of paper?" He held it up.

"Yes," said the Duke, promptly. "Russia."

"Russia? Yes, I suppose that is the natural association. Have you ever had any dealings with Russia or Russians?"

"No." The Duke shook his head emphatically. "Although, as a matter of fact, my mother was a Russian lady—she died when I was an infant—I have not only never been to Russia, but, so far as I am aware, I have never come into contact with any Russians in my life."

"And you can conceive of no reason why a Russian Terrorist organization should threaten you?"

"Except that I have identified myself rather prominently with anti-revolutionary propaganda in this country." The Duke of Berrisford was in fact, as I remembered, well known for his vigorous associations with the High Tory party.

"Quite." Q. Q. nodded acceptance of the hypothesis implied. "And you received this last night—by post?"

"Yes. By the last post. Here is the envelope." The Duke took it from his pocket and passed it across the desk.

The Chief scrutinized the envelope and postmark. It was addressed in the same crude capitals as the words it had contained.

"Posted in South-West One," he remarked. He held it up to the light, examined the quality of the paper. "A very cheap ordinary envelope—but my laboratory may

be able to bring out finger-prints upon it. Unfortunately, there will probably be many—the postman and the sorters as well as those of your servant and your own. Still, we'll try. We may get a clue to the sender that way. I suppose Sebright couldn't identify the finger-prints on the enclosure—they're plain enough ? "

" I am afraid Mr. Sebright did not try," said the Duke, with a self-conscious hesitation. " In fact, he rather laughed at me. He thinks, as you do, that it is merely a stupid hoax. But I made him promise to have my house watched to-night. And then, as I was still not quite satisfied, he sent me on to you. He said you were the man to know if there was anything in it."

" Much obliged," smiled the Chief. " Well, frankly, I think there is not. It looks to me like a poor practical joke. Would-be assassins do not usually make us a present of their finger-prints in this generous manner. My sober opinion is that you can make your mind quite easy. Anyway, the protection of Sebright's men should be quite sufficient if—improbably, as I think—anyone should be contemplating mischief to you. But you might leave me this "—he held up the piece of paper with the imprint of the hand—" and we'll make an effort to identify the gentleman who has virtually signed his name on it. I'm afraid I can't do more than that," he concluded, smilingly.

" Thank you," said the Duke, rising from his chair. " If I am alive to-morrow morning, I will ring you up and tell you that there is no further need to worry. I feel—I can't explain why—that if I survive the time-limit written on that paper I shall be quite safe."

" Then I shall confidently expect you to ring me up," said Mr. Quayne, extending his hand in farewell. " Mr. Creighton, will you see his Grace to the lift ? "

WHEN I returned, I found the Chief poring over the pages of Debrett.

" A piece of malicious humour, in my opinion," he said, smiling up at me. " Someone who doesn't like his ducal Highness's politics giving him a bit of a scare. But we'll just look him up in the book. Dukes with Russian mothers are not common. Here we are—Alfred Geoffrey—h'm, h'm, h'm—fifth Duke—born 1877—eldest son of Lord Clavering and Tatia Muranoff, daughter of ——, educated Berne, Bonn—succeeded third cousin in default of direct heir 1906—unmarried—h'm—doesn't tell us much," he said, closing the book, " except that our friend probably never expected one day to be Duke of Berrisford. But I think Sebright is right—just a rather tasteless joke. However, we'll find out all we can for him." He touched a bell on his desk.

Miss Satterthwaite appeared.

" Ah, Veronica ! " said the Chief, holding out the paper with the imprint to her. " Will you ask Scotland Yard to oblige me by making sure that they haven't got these finger-prints ? And telegraph the anthropometrical measurements to Paris, Berlin, Lausanne, Vienna, and Milan, asking for a reply as quickly as possible."

Scotland Yard reported during the afternoon that they could not identify the finger-prints we had submitted, and no reply came in from the Continental police-offices to which we had telegraphed. In the course of the day's work, I almost forgot the morning's visit of the Duke of Berrisford.

I was startlingly reminded of it next morning. A few minutes after the Chief came in (I had preceded his arrival by a quarter of an hour), the telephone bell rang upon his desk. He took up the receiver.

" Hullo ! — Yes ? — Sebright ? — Yes. What ?—Good God !—Yes—I'll meet you at Berrisford House—just as soon as I can get there." He put back the instrument and turned to me, his expression frankly startled. " The Duke of Berrisford has been murdered during the night—Sebright says in very mysterious circumstances." He picked up the telephone, spoke into it " Ask Miss Satterthwaite if any answer has come in about the finger-prints we telegraphed yesterday."

A moment later Miss Satterthwaite appeared. She carried several telegrams and a bulky file of typewritten documents.

" Any news, Veronica ? " asked Mr. Quayne.

" Three replies, Chief," she said, putting the telegrams in front of him.

" Vladimir Voronseff," he said, picking them up one by one. " Vladimir Voronseff—the name seems familiar. Have we got anything about him ? "

" A little." She passed him the file, opened it at a sheet marked by a slip of paper. I drew near and looked over his shoulder. It was evidently a record of Terrorist agents.

" Vladimir Voronseff," read the Chief, " age and origin unknown, implicated in the Sigursky Russian-Terrorist murders at Berne, July, 1900, but escaped; arrested for complicity in Terrorist bomb outrage, Berlin, April, 1905, released on insufficient evidence; active in Russian revolution 1905, finger-prints found Murievsky murder, Montreux, 1910; reappeared Russian politics 1910, active member of Bolshevik party, believed to have quarrelled with Lenin and left country Jan., 1920.' H'm," commented Mr. Quayne, grimly, " it looks as though we

had something to add to his *dossier*. Come along with me, Mr. Creighton. This is part of your education."

But very few minutes had elapsed when Mr. Quentin Quayne's limousine drew up outside Berrisford House—a big, gaunt, eighteenth-century mansion in the neighbourhood of Berkeley Square. Quivering, I confess, with excitement, I followed my Chief as, carrying the little attaché-case he told me he always kept ready in the car, he hurried up the three or four steps to the door. It was opened immediately for us by a scared and white-faced footman. Sebright, with a couple of his satellites in the background, was waiting for us in the luxuriously-furnished hall. He greeted Mr. Quayne eagerly.

"A most extraordinary case, Q. Q.!" he said. "Most extraordinary—I think it will puzzle even you."

Mr. Quayne moved towards the staircase.

"Well, the first thing is to see the body. You haven't touched it, I presume?"

Sebright smiled peculiarly.

"That's the extraordinary thing about it, Q. Q. There isn't any body. It has utterly disappeared."

Mr. Quayne stopped at the foot of the staircase.

"What—without trace?"

"Without trace. There has evidently been a terrible struggle upstairs—blood everywhere—you will see for yourself. But the body has completely vanished. It defeats me. The place has been searched from top to bottom. But how they got it out of the house, I can't imagine."

"H'm!" said the Chief. "Let us go upstairs."

The Duke's personal apartments on the first floor consisted of four rooms—a sort of small study or sitting-room, a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a bathroom. Intercommunicating doors led from each to each, but each had a door opening on to the corridor. So Sebright explained as we went up the staircase. It was in the bedroom that the murder had been committed, and Sebright led us directly to the fatal apartment. Outside the door a policeman and a frightened-looking young man stood in conversation.

"I put a guard on the door till you came," said Sebright. "This is Humphreys, the Duke's valet. You will probably want to question him."

"I probably shall," said the Chief. "But first we'll view the room for ourselves."

"There must have been a regular rough-and-tumble in it," commented Sebright, as he opened the door. "We've touched nothing, of course."

AS Sebright said, the room, at the first glance, bore every evidence of a struggle. A couple of chairs were overturned. One of the curtains near the window was torn from its pole. A dressing-gown lay heaped upon the floor. The bedclothes were thrown back in disorder—and, gruesomely significant, in the middle of the white undersheet was a great patch of now dried and dark-hued blood. Pinned upon that patch, with a dagger-like knife through its centre, was a piece of paper, marked with a familiar hand-print—in blood this time—and under the imprint, also crudely written in blood, the words, "*Exit the Duke of Berrisford.*"

Sebright pointed it out.

"It meant something after all yesterday," he said. "The murderer must have forced him back on the bed and stabbed him. That's obvious."

The Chief nodded.

"You have questioned the inmates of the house, of course," he said. "Did anyone hear any sort of noise during the night?"

"No one," replied Sebright. "That's one of the strange features of the case."

"Where do *you* sleep?" queried the Chief, turning sharply to the valet.

"At the top of the house, sir," was the reply. "There is a bell and a house-telephone by his Grace's bed by which he could call me during the night should he require me. But I heard no sound last night."

"And when did you last see the Duke?"

"He retired at ten-thirty, sir. I attended him, and saw him into bed. I then put away his clothes in the dressing-room and went to my own room. When I came as usual to call him at eight-thirty this morning, I found—this." The man broke off with a horrified catch in his voice.

Mr. Quayne nodded without remark. He went quickly across to the windows and examined them.

"Every door and window in the house was found locked inside this morning," interposed Sebright. "No entrance or exit was effected by any of those. Anyway, it would have been difficult. There is a straight drop to the street, and I had a constable up and down in front of the house all night, relieved every four hours. I promised the Duke I would do so—more to humour him than because I thought he was in danger—and I kept my promise."

Mr. Quayne again made no remark. He was going busily round the room, examining everything like a nosing terrier. He picked up the dressing-gown from the floor. There was blood upon the inside of one of the cuffs.

"The Duke's dressing-gown?" He turned sharply to the valet.

"Yes, sir."

"No sign of his pyjamas?"

"No, sir. They must be on—on the body, sir—wherever that is." The valet added the last clause despairingly.

Mr. Quayne grunted. He opened his attaché-case, took out a large magnifying-glass, and went to the bed. We watched him in silence while he examined it meticulously. Once he grunted, picked up something too small for me to see, and looked at it under the magnifying-glass. Then with his pen-knife he scraped a little of the dried patch of blood from the sheet and took it gingerly on the blade to the table near the windows.

"Get me one of the test-tubes from my case, Mr. Creighton," he said. "And the phial labelled No. 1."

I took the articles he demanded from the neatly-fitted little row of such in his attaché-case and handed them to him. He put the dried spot of blood into the test-tube, poured a drop of the liquid from the phial upon it.

"Now phial No. 2." I passed it to him. "The Strzyzowski serum," he said to Sebright, as he poured a drop into the test-tube. "I always keep a fresh supply in my case. Only a rough test under these conditions, of course, but it will probably give us a hint. Now the spirit lamp—and the microscope with a slide and cover," he added to me.

I lit the spirit-lamp into a tiny flame at his orders. He poured the drop or two of liquid on to the glass slide, held it for a moment over the flame until it had dried to a pinch of residue, put on the cover, and slipped it into the microscope.

"Blood, of course," said Sebright, as Mr. Quayne straightened himself from his examination.

"Oh, of course, blood," replied the Chief. "Mr. Creighton—another test-tube, please."

He took carefully a blood-stained thread from the cuff of the dressing-gown and subjected it to the same experiment.

"There are a good many blood-stains on the floor—leading into the bathroom," remarked Sebright, as Mr. Quayne pushed away the microscope with a grunt. "The murderer evidently went there to wash his hands."

"I had noticed them," said the Chief. "Let us go there."

He went briskly in front of us, through the intervening dressing-room, into the bathroom.

"There's the towel he used," said Sebright, pointing to one tucked into the towel-rack.

Mr. Quayne picked it up, looked at it, scrutinized it under his magnifying-glass, put it back again. Then he went to the toilet articles on the glass shelf over the lavatory-basin—a shaving-brush, a stick of shaving soap in its case, a safety razor, and a pair of scissors. He examined each carefully under his glass. Then, quickly, he went over the floor on his hands and knees with the magnifying-glass. I was expectant of some comment, but he said nothing.

"If you go into the study at the other side of the bedroom, Q. Q., you'll see something else interesting," said Sebright.

"We'll look at it," replied the Chief, and once more he went, leading our little procession, through the dressing-room and the bedroom to the study beyond.

"That supplies a part of the motive, anyway, I think," said Sebright, indicating the open door of a large safe dissimulated in the wall. A bunch of keys lay on the floor in front of it. "We found it like that this morning."

"H'm!" The Chief turned once more to the valet. "It was closed last night, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. I am sure of that," replied the man. "I went through here after his Grace had retired. His Grace was working in this room last evening after dinner with Mr. Mortimer, sir."

"Mr. Mortimer? Who is he?"

"His Grace's agent, sir. We have telephoned for him to come round as soon as possible."

"He may be able to tell us what was in the safe," explained Sebright.

APART from the open door of the safe, there was nothing abnormal in the aspect of this snugly-furnished room. The Chief went across to a writing desk between the windows. He held up a newspaper cutting headed: "*Lenin's Mortal Illness. Quarrels for his Succession.*"

"Have you seen this before?" he asked the valet.

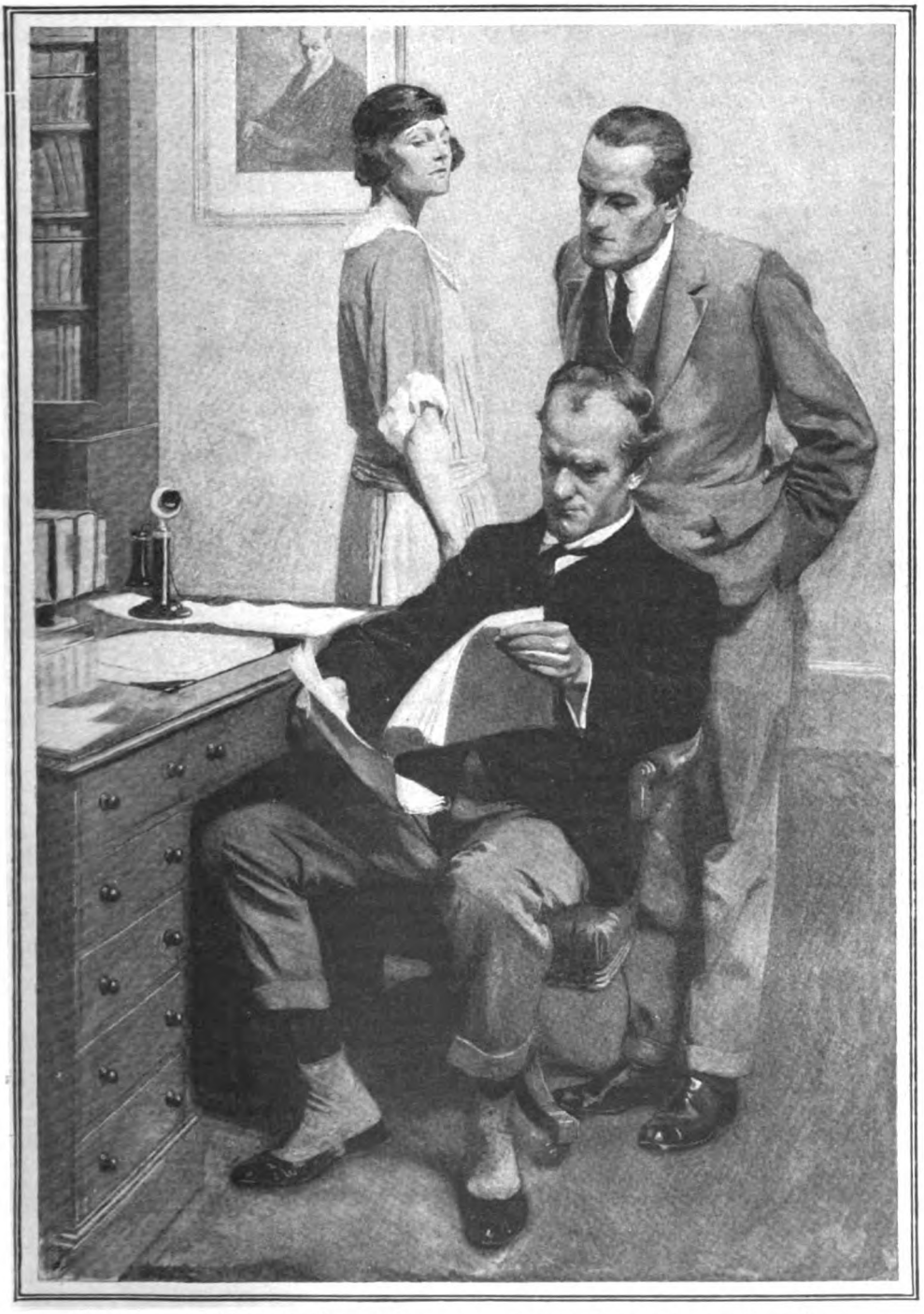
"Yes, sir. That has been there some days, sir. His Grace often cut things like that from the papers and kept them. He was very hot against the Reds, sir, as I dare say you know."

"That's probably the key to the whole business," murmured Sebright.

"And this?" Mr. Quayne pointed to an A B C railway guide lying open upon the desk. "Do you know if the Duke looked up a train yesterday?"

"Not that I'm aware of, sir. He had no call to do so."

"H'm!" Mr. Quayne pored over the open leaves with his magnifying-glass, and then turned to the shipping advertisements at the end.



Veronica passed him the file. I drew near and looked over his shoulder. It was evidently a record of Terrorist agents.

At that moment another white-faced man came deferentially into the room. He addressed himself to Sebright.

"Beg pardon, sir. But Mr. Mortimer has just come, sir. I thought perhaps you'd like to know, sir."

"Thank you," said Sebright. "Send him up at once. This is the Duke's butler, Quayne."

The Chief turned from the pages of the A B C he was studying.

"Ah," he said, "I was just going to send for you. Is there a white cat on the premises—a Persian, probably?"

The butler looked surprised, as we all did at this apparently irrelevant question.

"Yes, sir. As a matter of fact, his Grace was very fond of it, sir."

"Where is it now?"

"I don't know, sir. I don't think I've seen it this morning. I'll try and find it, sir, if you wish."

"Please do. And send up Mr. Mortimer."

The butler withdrew on tip-toe, as though from the death-chamber itself.

"That reminds me, sir," volunteered the valet, suddenly. "The cat was in these rooms when I left his Grace last night. His Grace told me to let it remain."

"But you did not see it this morning?"

"No, sir. I'm sure of that. It must have slipped out when—when whoever it was got into these rooms."

ANY further comment from Mr. Quayne was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Mortimer, a brisk, business-like little man with a face gravely concerned—as well it might be.

Mr. Quayne went direct to the point.

"Ah, Mr. Mortimer!" he said. "You were working with the Duke in this room last night, I understand. Can you tell us if there were any valuables in that safe?" He pointed to the open door.

Little Mr. Mortimer's eyes started as he stared at the safe.

"Good heavens, yes!" he cried. "There was twenty thousand pounds in bearer securities and two thousand pounds in bank-notes!"

"How do you know that?"

"I brought them here myself—last night. The Duke asked me yesterday to get those securities out of the bank, to cash a cheque for two thousand pounds, and to bring them round to him after dinner. I handed them to him in this room—it would have been about nine o'clock—and I saw him lock them up in that safe."

"Do you know why he required those securities—and particularly that large sum in cash?"

Mr. Mortimer shrugged his shoulders.

"He did not tell me and naturally I did not inquire. The Duke did not like to be questioned. I supposed that he was going abroad, as he did once before."

"When was that?"

"Let me see—it was in the spring of 1919."

"And did he take bearer securities and a large sum in cash on that occasion?"

"Yes. I remember expostulating with him, and being severely snubbed for my pains. Though perhaps I ought not to say it after this terrible business, the Duke had an eccentric streak in him, you know—very obstinate and peculiar sometimes."

"Was he peculiar last night?"

"He was—rather."

"In what way peculiar?"

"I can't define it—snappy and bad-tempered—not quite himself—one couldn't meet his eyes."

"Did he say anything to you of a threatening document he had received?"

"No." Mr. Mortimer shook his head. "Not a word."

"And how long was the Duke abroad on that last occasion?"

"A good many months—nearly a year, in fact."

"Did you know where he had been travelling?"

"No. He did not tell me—and snubbed me when I asked quite innocently. As I say, sometimes he was peculiar."

Mr. Quayne turned to the valet.

"And did you accompany the Duke on his travels?"

"No, sir. He didn't take anyone with him either time."

"Either time? When was the other occasion?"

"Soon after I took service with his Grace, sir—in 1909. He returned in May, 1910."

"H'm! Can you throw any light on his actions or whereabouts during that period, Mr. Mortimer?"

"No. That was my predecessor's time. I did not become the Duke's agent until 1912," replied little Mr. Mortimer.

"I confess I can't quite see what theory you have in your head, Q. Q.," said Sebright. "We seem to be getting right away from the main point of who killed the Duke, how they got in, how they got out again, and what has been done with the body. There's no doubt in my mind that the Duke has been done away with."

Mr. Quayne smiled at him rather grimly. "Yes, you are quite right there, Sebright—you have hit the exact phrase. By the way," he turned to the valet, "do you recognize the knife stabbed into the bed?"

"Yes, sir. It is one that usually lies on

the writing-table in this room. His Grace used it as a paper-knife, sir."

Mr. Quayne nodded. "Settles that. Now, just go and see whether any of the Duke's clothes are missing, will you?"

The valet departed, and Mr. Quayne turned again to Sebright.

"You had the house watched last night. Are those constables here?"

"Yes. I telephoned for them. They are waiting downstairs."

"I should like to question them."

"By all means."

While Sebright went out of the room to fetch up his men, Mr. Quayne addressed himself again to the Duke's agent.

"Who would succeed to the Dukedom?" he asked.

Mr. Mortimer shrugged his shoulders.

"It becomes extinct, I believe. The Duke was the last of his line, and he came into it only indirectly. Tragic the way these ancient families die out."

Sebright re-entered the room with a police-constable.

"This is the man who watched the house from six p.m. to ten p.m. last night," he said.

The policeman had only disappointing replies to Mr. Quayne's sharp interrogations. He had patrolled up and down for fifty yards in front of the house from six p.m. to ten p.m. The street was quiet and almost deserted. He had seen no one suspicious at all. The Duke himself had driven up in his car at six-fifteen, and entered the house. At about nine-five a gentleman in evening dress, carrying a small suit-case, had driven up in a taxi and been admitted by the front door. At nine-twenty a servant had come out of the house, fetched a taxi, and the gentleman had driven away again—this time without the suit-case. He recognized Mr. Mortimer as the gentleman in question.

"That reminds me," exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, suddenly. "I left that suit-case here. I brought the securities in it. The Duke kindly offered to send it back direct to my office, as I was going on to a supper-party."

At that moment the valet re-entered the room.

"Mr. Mortimer says he left a small suit-case here last night," said Mr. Quayne. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Yes. I saw it, sir. It was left in this room after his Grace retired, sir." The valet looked around the room. "But—it's curious—it doesn't seem to be here now. And no one has been in to clean, sir."

"I think we can provisionally assume that the suit-case served to carry away those securities again," remarked Mr. Quayne.

"And what about the clothes? Are any missing?"

"Yes, sir. An old tweed suit his Grace used for fishing on wet days last year, a pair of shooting boots, a flannel shirt, the old overcoat he wore with the suit, and a soft hat."

Q. Q. nodded. "All right. Let's hear the second constable," he said.

THE second policeman stated that he had patrolled from ten p.m. to two a.m. He had seen no suspicious persons about the house. A minute or so after he had come on duty, a man—he had spoken to him and ascertained that he was the butler—had come out by the servants' entrance. At five minutes past midnight a man had come out of the front door, carrying a small suit-case. He had challenged him, and the man, who spoke in the tones of a gentleman, had said that he was the Duke's agent, had wished him good-night, and jumped into a passing taxi.

"Who was that man?" queried Sebright, sharply. "Mr. Mortimer had left two hours before. It was one of the fellows we are after for a certainty. Can you describe his appearance, Rogers?"

"Yes, sir. He was a tall, clean-shaven man, wearing an overcoat and a soft hat. Of course, as he didn't seem to be a suspicious character, I didn't take much heed of him, but I did notice that he wore rather heavy boots. Picking up that taxi as he did, he was gone in a moment or two."

Sebright was suddenly excited.

"We're on the track at last, Q. Q.!" he cried. "Don't you think so?"

"Decidedly," Mr. Quayne agreed quietly. "You are sure the man was clean-shaven, constable?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"The Duke of Berrisford had a moustache and beard," I murmured, almost to myself.

Mr. Quayne turned on me sharply.

"All right, Mr. Creighton. Keep your thoughts to yourself for the present. Did you see anyone else, constable?"

"Yes, sir. At twelve-forty-five the butler came back, and let himself in at the servants' door with a key. A little time later I heard the front door being bolted and chained from the inside."

Just at that moment the butler came into the room.

"We've searched the house, but we can't find the cat anywhere, sir," he reported.

"Never mind that now," said Mr. Quayne. "The constable here reports that you left the house just after ten, and returned at twelve-forty-five. Where had you been?"

"Yes, sir. That is so, sir. I went to have a little bridge in the servants' hall at

Lord Bradwood's, round the corner, sir. I can prove that, sir." The man looked frightened under Sebright's suspicious glance. " I went with his Grace's permission, sir."

" And you locked up the front door, *after* you returned ? "

" Yes, sir. I always do the locking up myself, sir."

" And was there anyone in the hall when you came to lock up ? "

" No, sir. The footman on duty is allowed to go to bed at twelve o'clock if there's nothing doing, as there wasn't last night, sir."

" And the door was normally locked and bolted when you came down this morning ? "

" Yes, sir. It hadn't been interfered with in any way, sir."

" Very good," said Mr. Quayne. " By the way, if you look up the chimney in the dressing-room, I think you may find the missing cat."

" You don't say so, sir ! " ejaculated the butler, hurrying out of the room.

A minute later he returned with the sooty and blood-stained corpse of the cat in his hands.

" You're right, sir ! " he exclaimed. " Up the chimney it was. And its head almost cut off ! The brutes ! It must have attacked them, sir—and they killed it to keep it quiet."

" Possibly," agreed Mr. Quayne. " And now the third constable, Sebright ? " He glanced at his watch. " Time is pressing."

THE third constable had seen nothing, absolutely nothing. He had patrolled from two a.m. to six a.m. Sebright cross-questioned him. Had he left his beat at all ? Rather confusedly, the policeman admitted that he had. He had heard a police-whistle blown in an adjoining street and had run round the corner in case assistance was required. It appeared that a couple of men had been detected in a burglary in the vicinity and had been chased by the officer on the beat, who blew his whistle for help. The constable had caught a glimpse of the fugitives away down the street and had taken up the hunt, desisting when he saw them run into the arms of three policemen at the farther end. He might have been away—he admitted—for ten minutes. Not more. The time was three-fifteen a.m — three-fifteen to about three-twenty-five.

" Now we're coming to it ! " proclaimed Sebright, triumphantly. " That ten minutes was the time in which the Duke's body was removed from the house ! "

Mr. Quayne smiled.

" You may be right, of course, Sebright. But why, do you suggest, should they remove the body ? "

Sebright pondered a moment, and then had an idea.

" It's possible—just possible—that they did not after all kill the Duke on the spot, isn't it ? They may have merely wounded him—and now be holding him concealed somewhere for purposes of their own. He must have been intensely hated by the Red secret societies—to my certain knowledge he spent thousands on anti-Communist propaganda work."

" Yes. I should say they disliked him extremely," agreed the Chief. " Your theory is possibly the correct one—but so far you haven't explained how anyone got into the house unseen, nor how the hypothetical people who left between three-fifteen and three-twenty-five managed to lock all the doors and windows behind them."

" I haven't commenced my investigation yet, Q. Q.," replied Sebright, with a touch of irritation. " I've just been letting you run your eye over the case. I dare say I shall find plenty of clues when I get to work."

" Well, I'll leave you to it," said Mr. Quayne, looking again at his watch. " I have several important matters to attend to this morning. But whatever you do or do not find here, there's one very important thing I strongly recommend you to attend to. A Wilson boat sails from Hull to Riga at five o'clock this evening. Among her passengers you will find a gentleman about five feet eleven in height, clean-shaven, dressed in the clothes missing from the Duke of Berrisford's wardrobe and carrying Mr Mortimer's suit-case with twenty thousand pounds' worth of securities and two thousand in notes inside it. He will certainly have a deep scratch across the back of his left hand. He arrived at Hull at nine-fifty-five this morning by the four-forty-five from King's Cross. I cannot tell you what name is on his passport—but he is known to the Continental police as Vladimir Voronseff, a very dangerous member of Russian Terrorist organizations for the past twenty-five years. If you will wire to the Hull police to arrest him you will have the key to this mystery in your hands. And I should be very much obliged to you if you would bring your prisoner round to my office tomorrow morning. I want a word or two with him." Then, turning to the valet, he added : " And you come also."

Sebright stared at him.

" But how in the world do you know that ? " he exclaimed.

" I haven't time to explain that now," replied the Chief, with his grim smile. " It's eleven-thirty, and I have an appointment at a quarter to twelve. But whatever you do,

"Ah, Mr. Mortimer!" said Q. Q. "You were working with the Duke in this room last night, I understand. Can you tell us if there were any valuables in that safe?"

don't let Vladimir Voronseff sail from Hull by that boat this evening. Wire at once!"

With the air of a man already behind time, Mr. Quayne hurried out of the room and down the stairs. I followed him.

As the car whirred us back to the office, I ventured on a remark.

"I've got a hazy idea of what's in your mind, Mr. Quayne," I said. "But, if I'm right, one thing baffles me. The Duke of Berrisford's terror yesterday was surely genuine!"

He looked at me shrewdly.

"I think you'll do," he commented. "Yes. The Duke's terror was genuine enough—and with good reason. But now we'll put it out of our minds till to-morrow. I have other things to think of."

WE had scarcely settled ourselves to work in the office next morning when the telephone bell rang. Mr. Quayne answered it. . . .

"Yes ?—Sebright ?—Oh, you've got him ? —Good !—I'm here, waiting for you." He smiled as he put the receiver back and turned to me. "In a few minutes, Mr. Creighton, we may—or may not—solve the mystery of the Duke of Berrisford."

Not a quarter of an hour had elapsed when the door opened and Sebright appeared. He held the door wide open for the entrance of a tall, clean-shaven, haggard-faced man, flanked by a couple of athletic-looking detectives. The prisoner's wrists were handcuffed together in front of him, and on the back of the left hand was the long scratch that Mr. Quayne had prophesied. Though it eluded my exact identification, there was something vaguely familiar about the man as he was marched to the centre of the room.

"There's your man, Q. Q.," said Sebright. "According to his passport, his name is Sergius Gregoriev."

"But his name among the comrades is Vladimir Voronseff," remarked Mr. Quayne, with his quiet smile. "Is that not so ?" he added, addressing himself to the prisoner.

The man held himself with a sneeringly cool self-assurance, but, watching him, I thought there was a maniacal gleam in his slightly protruding eyes.

"It is," he replied, insolently. There was just the faintest foreign twang in it ; otherwise his English was perfect. "Vladimir Voronseff—you'll hear it often enough when I get back to Russia. Vladimir Voronseff—the only man Ilyitch Lenin was ever afraid of. And now it's my turn." He laughed, shortly and rather horribly. Then he reverted abruptly to his insolent calmness. "I shall expect diplomatic satisfaction for this outrage," he said. "I advise you gentlemen in your own interests to release me at once. You can have no possible charge against me."

"Indeed ?" remarked Mr. Quayne, his keen eyes fixed on the man's face. "And what happened to the Duke of Berrisford ?"

The prisoner grinned evilly, and I was certain of the maniacal light in his eyes.

"I killed him," he said, as though it were the most natural thing in the world. "But I know your law—you cannot charge me with that."

"That's true," muttered Sebright. "We can't charge him with it till the body's found —we can't even accept his confession."

Mr. Quayne made a motion with his hand.

"Just leave him to me for a moment, Sebright," he said. "And why did you kill the Duke of Berrisford ?" he challenged the prisoner.

The man stared at him insolently.

"It was necessary," he said, curtly. "Either Vladimir Voronseff or the Duke of Berrisford had to die."

"Quite." Mr. Quayne spoke the word very quietly as he rose with an unhurried deliberation from his chair. He went across to his prisoner, looking fixedly in the eyes as he came. "But you made a mistake." He held the man's eyes in a strange fascination as he advanced, spoke in quietly level tones. "It is Vladimir Voronseff who is going to die. You understand ? *It is Vladimir Voronseff who is going to die !*"

As he uttered the last word his fist shot out in a pugilist's blow from his immensely powerful broad shoulders, straight at the man's jaw. The fellow went down like a log between the two startled detectives.

"Steady, Q. Q. !" cried Sebright. I myself had jumped from my seat in horror at this cowardly assault upon a pinioned prisoner

Mr. Quayne stood back from his victim, contemplated the man lying unconscious on the floor.

"Take off those handcuffs !" he ordered, curtly. "Some water, Mr. Creighton !"

I fetched it in an instant. He dabbed it on the man's head, forced some liquid between his teeth from a pocket flask. Presently the man's chest heaved, and, supported by Mr. Quayne's arm, Vladimir Voronseff sat up blinking stupidly.

"Where am I ?" he gasped. He stared at the Chief. "Ah, Mr. Quayne, I promised to telephone you this morning, didn't I ?—I'm alive—but—but—I can't quite remember—I think I must have been in an accident —or have I been ill ?"

I stared at him in bewilderment. The man's face had altered. The vicious, insolent cruelty of it had been replaced by a feeble vacuousness. I recognized suddenly that loose-lipped mouth, those bulbous eyes, unfamiliar though was the clean-shaven face. Sebright recognized it also.

"Good God !" he exclaimed. "The Duke himself !"

"The Duke himself," confirmed Mr. Quayne, helping the shaken man to a chair. "Yes, Duke," he said to him, "you have been ill—very ill—and unless you agree to put yourself under the care of a very clever doctor friend of mine you may have a relapse that will be past cure."

The Duke passed his hand dazedly across his brow.

"I'll do anything you suggest," he said, feebly. "I feel I have just escaped a terrible danger—but—it—it's all foggy to me."

Q. Q. went back to his desk, seated himself, and took a sheet of note-paper.

"Fetch his valet in," he said to me, looking up from the note he was writing.

I did so.

The man's astonishment when he beheld his master seated in that chair was almost comic. He stared round at us.

"*It's him!*" he gasped. "His Grace—*alive!* Even without his beard, I'd know him anywhere!" He ran across to his master. "Oh, your Grace!" he cried. "What have they done to you, the scoundrels? What's happened to your beard?"

The Duke instinctively felt over his chin.

"My beard!" he repeated, stupidly. "It's gone! Mr. Quayne, who shaved off my beard?"

The Chief put the note he had written into an envelope, stuck it down.

"Don't worry about that now!" he said, kindly. "My car will take you and your man round to this doctor in Harley Street. And if you take my advice you will put yourself completely under his care. You will find that all this trouble will vanish like a bad dream—for ever."

WHEN we three were left alone in the room, Sebright gave voice to his impatient curiosity.

"I still don't understand, Q. Q.," he said. "The whole thing beats me!"

The Chief leaned back in his chair and smiled at us. "The unfortunate man whom I have just sent round to a specialist friend of mine is—probably as the result of a somewhat degenerate heredity—one of those examples of dissociation of personality which crop up from time to time. He possesses three personalities—the Duke of Berrisford, who knows nothing of Vladimir Voronseff; a fluctuating intermediate personality—the personality that Mr. Mortimer described as peculiar, and which had the forethought to provide itself with a considerable amount of cash for vaguely foreseen eventualities, and apparently a considerable amount of insane cunning—we must postulate that intermediate personality, but I think my specialist friend will diagnose its existence; and, finally, the totally distinct personality of Vladimir Voronseff, fundamentally unbalanced and homicidally insane, as are most Terrorist revolutionaries, which perceived the Duke of Berrisford as an obstacle in its way and hated it with a mortal hatred."

"What was it aiming at, then?" queried Sebright.

"At getting back to Russia and taking part in the scramble for power after the death of Lenin. If my theory is correct, as a young man in Switzerland, where he was educated—and then never expecting to be one day Duke of Berrisford—he fell under the influence of some of the numerous Russian Terrorists for whom Switzerland has always been a city of refuge, and threw in his lot with them under a Russian pseudonym. Some hereditary influence from his Russian mother may have helped the emergence of a definite Russian personality. And then, probably, one fine day he woke up, as it were—he probably thought he had been ill and suffering from loss of memory; at any rate, he was once more the son of Lord Clavering, and eventually the Duke of Berrisford. But neither personality was stable in him, and during a quarter of a century he has alternated between the two—if you compare the chronology of Vladimir Voronseff with that of the Duke of Berrisford you will find that the activities of the one coincide with the absences of the other. That is the rough outline; the details probably no one will ever know."

"But how did you deduce all this?" said Sebright again.

"When he came round to me with that imprint of the red hand, I disbelieved, as you did, in the authenticity of the menace. But I was convinced by his general manner, and particularly by his *certainty* of danger, though he could give no reason for it, that his subconscious mind knew more of the origin of that childish bogey than he could say. In fact, I thought that probably, obsessed with fears of Red Revolution as he notoriously was, he had automatically and unconsciously sent it to himself—as, in fact, he did. But when you telephoned me that he had been assassinated, I confess I was shaken and startled—especially as, simultaneously, we received from Berlin, Paris, and Lausanne the identification of the finger-prints as those of Vladimir Voronseff, a well-known Terrorist criminal.

"We go round to Berrisford House, and we find firstly that there is no corpse, and only very obviously artificial evidences of struggle in the room. No one has effected burglarious entry. There was a large patch of blood on the sheet, and on the sheet also were a number of short white hairs—those of a cat. The Strzyzowski test established at once that the blood was not human, although the blood on the cuffs of the dressing-gown was. Evidently the wearer had killed the cat and been scratched in the process. In the bath-room I discovered one or two hairs from a beard in the junction of a pair of scissors, also the shaving-brush was still slightly damp. The inference from that was obvious. In the sitting-room was the newspaper cutting about Lenin and an A B C open at the time-table to Hull. I could just see the dent of a finger-nail under the four-forty-five. The Duke's agent testified to the peculiar business of the

securities and the cash. Their present absence was evident. The constables established clearly that no stranger had left the house except the one clean-shaven man with the suit-case. To my mind, it was all as plain as daylight." He broke off and smiled at us.

"When you had proved my hypothesis by bringing Vladimir Voronseff here this morning, I saw at once that he was, as I expected, the Duke himself. I saw also that he firmly believed himself to be Voronseff, and the Duke to be dead. He could have been disabused of that belief by a long psychological process. The problem was how to do it on the spot in order to convince *you*, Sebright, as the representative of the law, who would otherwise certainly have arrested him on the preliminary charge of theft, and perhaps in the sequel have ineradicably fixed the Voronseff personality as a permanence. There was just one chance—the cerebral commotion caused by a violent blow. I took that chance—with the happy result we have seen.

"These cases," added Q.Q., in conclusion, "are comparatively common. You will find the classic example in the works of Dr. Prince—the case of Miss Beauchamp, a New England lady who, in the year 1898, was treated by Dr. Prince for a strange triple dissociation of personality. There are some hundreds of other instances. Miss Beauchamp developed three personalities, two that knew nothing of each other, and one that knew both—and all those personalities were utterly at variance with each other. One of the awkward incidents, apart from the clash of moral ideas and actions, was a very near escape from suicide for Miss Beauchamp. Robert Louis Stevenson did not know that there was such an authentically scientific basis for his story when he created Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

(The next story in this series, "The Fourth Degree," is one of the most dramatic detective stories we have ever published.)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 134.

(The Second of the Series.)

OUR uprights English poets show,
Both living forty years ago.
One wrote of roses, rats, and ring,
And one of beggar maid and king.

1. Edible plant is what we see;
   And listen, please, be true to me.
2. One against fifty-three! The feat
   Is told in ballad of the fleet.
3. This fairy king evolved a scheme
   Told in a famous summer dream.
4. Capital city, president,
   To falsehood he would not consent.
5. The mother of invention view,
   If what the proverb says is true.
6. A narrow neck of land. Here are
   A couple—Suez, Panama.
7. Seemingly no one, here is seen
   Father of charming heroine.
8. Who saw her face was turned to stone,
   By Perseus she was overthrown.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 134 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on September 11th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 133.

THE first is read, the last are guessed,
And both should be of interest.
The page lies open to your eyes;
Take as your motto: Enter—prize.

1. One of a band of sisters nine.
2. Last letter must small hill resign.
3. A circle runs the earth around.
4. Two rhyming words, in London found.
5. A game by no means free from faults.
6. A wall protects from foes' assaults.
7. A friend in France please indicate.
8. Sermon can act as opiate.
9. Newfoundlands, mongrels, mastiffs, curs, Poms, poodles, spaniels, terriers.

PAX.

1. T	hali	A
2. H	illo	C
3. E	quato	R
4. S	oh	O
5. T	enni	S
6. R	ampar	T
7. A	m	I
8. N	arcoti	C
9. D	og	S

NOTES.—Light 1. One of the Muses. 2. Hillock.

"TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS"

by

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY DAVIS

I.

TILLINGHAST had always wanted to see a London fog. He had heard of them, read of them, and imagined them. But though he had spent a good nine months in a city universally notorious for its special and unequalled brand, he had so far failed to discover a genuine "London particular." Of pea-soup density he had heard they were, and that you could barely see your hand in front of you. Foggy days, indeed, he had found and days that were sad and grey and dismal, yet never one of those legendary fogs which drop down on you, blot out all customary landmarks, and make the outside world a thing of mystery and unimaginable adventure. Tillinghast, being young and more than ordinarily romantic, saw them like that. His friends told him how nowadays, like snow and frost and other wintry aspects which once prevailed here, they were growing scarce. "And a good job, too!" they added, prosaically.

Tillinghast, however, was not prosaic. He was spending a year in London and he meant to make the most of it. By day he worked with an insurance company, the head office of which was in New York. He had been detached for this purpose. When his year was up he would return and take charge of a department. Meanwhile, he was making the most of London, as a young man should.

He had two furnished rooms in the Albert Road, which faces Regent's Park. So every morning he walked through the park to Baker Street and took the Underground to Moorgate; and most evenings he took the train back to Baker Street and walked home through the park. His landlady, Mrs. Cornish, cooked him chops or steaks. She could cook nothing else, apparently, except cabbage and potatoes. When he tired of these he plunged into Soho, where he found French restaurants and Italian restaurants and Chinese places with live Chinamen to wait on you. And after that a theatre or a dance.

On a Saturday afternoon, midway through November, he had come home at two o'clock, and even then the fog was gathering. Nobody did any work here on Saturday afternoons, and he had made an engagement to play tennis, on one of those hard red rubble courts where one can play throughout the winter. He changed into his flannels and watched the fog, and then he changed back again. The fog was moving up in earnest. The room grew dark; the Albert Road, the iron railings opposite, were shadowy and uncertain. The big trees had vanished. "Good," said Tillinghast; "it's come!"

He switched on both the electric lights, and every once and again he stood at the windows and watched it. Then he moved away to the open fire. It was snug and warm and light inside the house. Outside the fog drifted, now thick and now clearing so that you could glimpse across the road to the iron railings of the park. Sometimes the sky darkened, with an effect as though of approaching night, and next the fog lifted again before a stir of wind, and you could make out the traffic. Red buses that felt their way, and lorries and motors and taxis. These came and went like ghosts; but they were there.

It was half-past three or so when the last stir of wind died away and the fog closed in, raw and damp and yellow, as it had always been described to him. In spite of the shut windows, it invaded the house and crept about the rooms, the staircase, and the landings. But still it rejoiced Tillinghast, who had always wanted to see a London fog.

He went downstairs to get a nearer view. On the way he met Mrs. Cornish.

"Dreadful!" said she. "You could cut it with a knife."

"I'm going out in it for an hour," he answered. "I've always wanted to."

"You'll get lost," she cried.

"I won't," laughed Tillinghast; "I'll be back for a cup of tea."

"There's no telling when you'll be back if you go out in that."

He put on his overcoat and hat and took his cane, and went out at the front door. The fog was just such a fog as he had always pictured. He could see his hand in front of his nose, but little else.

The roadway was gone, the path opposite, and the iron railings that enclosed the outer park. What sparse traffic there was appeared suddenly and perilously and then was lost again. One heard but could not see. It carried lights, as though the darkness had fallen; but it was not dark yet, nor would it be for a good couple of hours. He passed the road safely and reached the path and the iron railings, and followed these till he came to the opening that led into the outer park. He found the footbridge that crosses the canal and spans two sections of the Zoological Gardens. He found the circular road between the park and the canal, and then he came into the park itself.

It was just fog. He stood alone in it, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, cut off from the world. It was wonderful, and exactly as he had always imagined it. London had disappeared; everything had disappeared. You could dance here, jump here, and perform the maddest antics, and nobody would see you. It was as though you had become invisible. Suddenly a strange roar, a savage barking, came out of the fog. It was some way off, and it came no nearer. A barking as of wild beasts in a primeval forest. He recognized it now. It was the sea-lions in the Zoo who were howling for their dinner. Tillinghast barked back at them.

A silence followed. He knew most of this park as he knew the inside of his trouser-pockets. He crossed it every morning on his way to Baker Street, and now he took the path that led down to the lake. "I must be careful not to tumble in," he said. On the way one other shape came out of the fog. A park-keeper. He said nothing. Tillinghast didn't want him to say anything and kept straight on. He came to what must be the lake, for one of his knees had brushed sharply against taut wire. He stooped and discovered that there was a knee-high wire fence around the lake. He had never noticed it before. "I'd have gone straight in," he laughed. The ducks, the cormorants, and gulls were all invisible. And silent. He wondered whether they liked it.

He followed the path still farther, making for the gate that leads to Baker Street. He crossed the double bridge that connects an island with both shores; and now it was all simple, provided you came out at the gate. The fog was denser than ever, and more yellow and more impenetrable. He found the gate, and next the road that encircles the park. "I'll go back the other way, past the shops and houses," he said; "it's all as easy as pie." After the park and solitude he wanted to see the other people in the fog and get the strangeness of the streets. But something had gone wrong. Like a blind man he had tapped his way across the road, and somehow the opposite path had not come. Nothing had come for a hundred yards or more, and then his foot had struck the kerbstone and the path; but neither could be the ones he had had in mind. Still, he was sure that if he bore to the left he must come out in the road with the shops that went uphill, and so back to his rooms with Mrs. Cornish. When you reached the canal you went on a little farther and then you curved round to the right.

He tapped his way and kept on, and now the fog grew darker. Points of light were glowing feebly in the street lamps, and he could make out nothing else. He felt for the opening that would take him into the main street with the shops, but it never came. At last he concluded that he was lost, and that, soon or late, he must ask somebody. And, meanwhile, he enjoyed being lost and being within a mile or two of his home at the same time. There was a something in it, fantastical and original, which pleased Tillinghast.

EVEN the most amusing of games must have an ending, and he had decided to ask the next person he heard to put him right. For out here you only heard people. You did not see them. It was like being blind, he realized, and yet not blind. He bumped into walls and hit the front steps of invisible houses, and once he found a letter-box on what he judged must be a corner. If he'd only had somebody to enjoy this with him! Another American. It would have been the adventure of their lives. They would have told everybody when they got home, and out here they would have revelled in it. But there was no other American, and when Tillinghast heard footsteps they came and went mysteriously, and he could never catch up with them. But at last through the fog he made out a sign that was brightly

lighted. "TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS," it said, in capitals. It was stuck in a brightly-lighted window, flush with the street. "That's O.K.," answered Tillinghast; "I'll have some tea and light refreshments and ask the people where I am."

"I'm going out in the fog for an hour. I've always wanted to."

"You'll get lost," cried Mrs. Cornish.

He found a door and entered the shop, which was so much like a private house that at first he hesitated. But a second sign said "THIS WAY," also in capitals, and was accompanied by a drawing of a hand. On the finger next to the little finger was depicted a ring with a single stone that threw out rays, and the first finger was pointing to a shallow flight of stairs and a second door which stood wide open. Tillinghast left the entrance-hall and proceeded up the shallow flight of stairs.

There seemed to be no other customers about, in spite of the two waitresses and a more mature woman seated at a pay-desk next to the door. Tillinghast removed his hat, placed his cane upon a chair, and seated himself at a table. The two waitresses looked at one another and one said: "You go," and gave the other a shove which sent her flying half-way down the room. Then they both burst out laughing.

"Tea—I want my tea," said Tillinghast; and the waitress who had been shoved came forward and gravely asked, "For one, sir?"

"No, for three," he answered; and when she looked a question, "I said three and I mean three."

She called out, "Tea for three," and the second waitress departed. The first one followed, no doubt to look outside and see what had become of Tillinghast's companions. She was the loveliest of all the lovely young women he had ever gazed upon. Eighteen or thereabouts, with red-gold hair and such a complexion—cream and roses!—and eyes to match, and the roundest, slimmest figure. "A peach," thought Tillinghast. "A waitress but a peach, and perhaps she's a peach of a waitress!"

The girl returned.

"Will you wait for your friends?" she asked.

"What friends?" he answered.

"You ordered tea for three."

"Well, there's you and the flapper—she is a flapper, isn't she?—and

me; and what about the lady at the pay-desk?"

The young woman understood.

"It isn't usual," she said; "but seeing business is so quiet——"

"It's this fog?" asked Tillinghast.

"It's spoilt everything," she answered.

"And here's the flapper, whose name is Annabel. Only to think that forty minutes ago I was barking like a sea-lion and here I am having tea with two young ladies! Do you know where we are?" he asked, "because I'm so completely lost that I'm thinking of offering a reward to the finder."

The flapper placed her tray upon the table and in the most businesslike manner proceeded to set out tea for three, including cake, jam, and bread-and-butter. And when she was done, "My name isn't Annabel," she said, with a snort.

"No, it's Teas; and you're Light Refreshments?" asked Tillinghast, turning to the other girl. "That's the name of the firm, isn't it?"

The lovely girl scorned him.

"Don't be silly," she said, loftily, and added, "if you can help it."

"I can help it," returned Tillinghast. "But sometimes one unbends. In the presence of one's juniors, for instance. And life is so serious, so purposeful, so earnest, that a little judicious fooling helps one to endure its terrors."

"Go on," said the flapper; "please say some more!"

"Could you really stand it?" asked Tillinghast.

"What about the kettle?" inquired the other waitress; and, "What about the kettle?" echoed Tillinghast.

"Boiling, I suppose. I'll go and see."

The flapper left them and presently returned with a second tray upon which stood a large hot-water jug and a bulbous brown-ware tea-pot.

"Now we can begin," said Tillinghast.

HE offered the two young women chairs, and then he looked at the silent figure seated at the pay-desk. This third and more mature person was dressed in a black stuff gown and wore the regulation cap and apron of a parlourmaid in a good house. "Won't she mind—leaving her out in the cold?" he asked.

"She'll mind if you go without paying," replied the flapper. "She always has her tea before she comes on duty."

"You two young ladies," cried she of the pay-desk, who had listened to every word; "the way you carries on!"

"It's all right, Susan," answered the older girl. "You needn't bother. I don't believe anybody else'll come in this fog."

"We'll take his money," cried the flapper; "and if he won't pay we'll call for help."

"The way you two young ladies carries on!" repeated Susan, and left her seat and retired into the body of the house.

"Who is going to pour," asked Tillinghast—"Teas or Light Refreshments?"

"Don't be a goose," returned the flapper; "my name's Evelyn and this is Lois."

"Lois what?"

"Never you mind," replied the flapper. "You haven't been properly introduced and you're not going to be."

"Why not?"

"Because we don't know you, except in the way of business."

"Pride, sheer pride," responded Tillinghast. "I come from a democratic country where everybody is as good as everybody else."

"How horrible!" returned the flapper.

"Except Wops and Kikes and Negroes and Hunyaks and Poles and lots of other interesting people."

"Negroes?" asked the older girl. "You come from Africa, and all those others are the names of savage tribes?"

"No; Africa came to us, or, rather, we fetched it. And they're not so darned savage——"

"I know," announced the flapper; "you're an American."

"The penetration of that young woman is extraordinary. Perfectly extraordinary! Now, how on earth did you penetrate my disguise? Nine solid months I've been in England, undiscovered, undetected——"

"You do tell the most awful lies," said the flapper, calmly. "Doesn't he, Lois?"

"I think he's rather nice, considering."

"Considering what?" asked Tillinghast.

"Considering you're a customer. We do get the most awful people in here sometimes. We're bound to wait on everybody. We're far more democratic than you are."

Tillinghast considered for a moment.

"I suppose you have to do this kind of thing?" he asked.

"No choice," responded both girls.

"Hard up?"

"Stony!" cried the flapper; but Lois added: "Of course, on a decent day there are lots of customers and we do jog along."

Tillinghast looked about him—at the good pictures on the walls, at the comfortable chairs and solid furniture; and next at the two girls in bright aprons and well-fitting dresses, the one in russet brown, the flapper in bright green, that went well with her fair hair.

"You try to keep it as much like a private house as possible?" he asked.

"Yes, that's the idea; and it's caught

on," returned the older girl. "We don't like people to feel they're in an ordinary teashop. More like guests."

"That's bright," said Tillinghast.

"You see, we were left alone with this house and Susan."

"Orphans!" cried the flapper, beaming with delight.

"You needn't be so pleased about it," the older girl reproved her.

"So you're sisters?" asked Tillinghast.

"Good guess!" exclaimed the flapper. "What are you?"

"My name's Tillinghast. Benjamin Tillinghast, sometimes called Ben for short. I'm my father's favourite, the youngest. Also the oldest. You see, there's only me. Don't you think Ben's nice?"

"I don't," said the flapper.

"It's as good as Evelyn."

"I didn't choose Evelyn."

"I'm not guilty either," announced the American.

They were half-way through their tea when Tillinghast discovered the gramophone, a good one in an upright cabinet, the lower half of which was full of records.

"Do you dance to it?" he asked.

"Of course we do," said the flapper.

"Let's turn it on afterwards and have a dance?"

"But——" began Lois.

'Ben's introduced himself—I can't remember his other name—but Ben's all right."

"Tillinghast." The young man pronounced it slowly this time.

"Well, Mr. Tillinghast"—Lois said it carefully—"if you promise to go at half-past six—that's the hour we close on Saturdays——"

Evelyn was shaking with laughter. She tried to kick Lois under the table and hit Tillinghast instead.

"Oh!" he cried. "I don't mind punching, but kicking isn't fair."

"Did that child kick you?" asked Lois. "She's no manners.

"None at all," said Tillinghast. "Kicking with her mouth full, too! I won't dance with her; I won't pay for her tea. Can you think of anything else I won't do? I'm through."

"You won't come again," said the flapper.

"But I will," cried Tillinghast. "I'll come whenever I can. This is the jolliest place in London. In all the world!" He was looking deep into Lois's hazel eyes as he spoke, and she blushed, the roses in her cheeks growing rosier, the cream in her cheeks growing creamier. "All hands to the gramophone!" he ended; and up he arose and looked through the records and found two fox-trots and a one-step and a song by Caruso.

Lois was stooping beside him.

"Let's have Caruso on while we get ready," he proposed.

"You like him?" she asked.

"I love him."

They put Caruso on, and while he sang they rolled up the carpet and put aside chairs and tables. The floor was clear now. They let Caruso finish. Then came the first fox-trot, and Tillinghast actually held Lois in his arms, light, and slim, and yielding.

Evelyn looked on.

"Good!" she cried, admiring them.

"Shut up!" said Tillinghast.

They floated round the room, the fog making a thin veil as it crept in from the outside, unseen world of London. In the doorway stood Susan, fascinated and absorbed. Hearing the music, she had come back to see what was going on, and now with Evelyn was watching them.

TILLINGHAST had danced with many partners, but never with one like this girl, who moved as he moved, feeling the music as he felt it, answering his lightest touch, following his mood, his whim, his least improvisation. And soft in his arms she was, and light as a spirit come down to earth.

"Fairy!" he whispered.

"Mortal!" she answered.

"Lark and nightingale and swallow!"

With closed lids she was smiling faintly up at him.

His cheek brushed hers.

"Now, none of that!" cried the flapper.

"I was in a trance," whispered Tillinghast; "that child has broken it."

The music stopped suddenly, finding them both suspended on the same note, the same movement.

"None of what?" asked Tillinghast, standing before the flapper.

"It's my turn," she answered.

They put on a fresh record and the flapper danced adoringly but rather heavily, treading on Tillinghast's feet and losing the time, the rhythm, the moment.

"I do like you," she said.

"Here, that's my big toe!" cried Tillinghast.

"You shouldn't stick it in the way. But I do like you all the same," she answered.

"Now, that's what I call real flapper talk," said Tillinghast.

"Nobody takes us seriously," she complained.

"Do you want me to propose?" he asked.

"No, I don't; but you might say I'm just as nice as Lois."

"Perhaps, when you've thinned down a bit, you will be," he comforted her.

"I *am* a bit too plump," she agreed.

"Flappers often are. There's my cousin Janet. Oh!" he howled, as she trod hard on him again.

"I'm so sorry," she apologized. "But it's your feet; they will get in the way."

"Well, we can't dance without 'em."

"Shall I tell you a secret?" whispered the flapper.

"Go ahead."

"My name isn't Evelyn."

"And mine's not Tillinghast."

"You *are* a fibber!" she reproached him.

"I am," he answered, heartily.

"But you are Ben?" she pressed him.

"Why not?"

The record came to an end and they stopped and chose a fresh one.

"Now it's Susan's turn," cried Lois.

But Susan wasn't to be cajoled. "Not me, miss," she answered; "this fancy dancing's beyond the likes o' me."

He bowed to Lois.

"You'll have to go after this one," she warned him; and again they moved away.

"I'm coming to-morrow," he whispered.

"There are no to-morrows," she whispered back. "It'll be fine and bright and clear again."

"God bless the fog; I'm all for it."

They were silent till the music ended.

"One more?" he begged.

She pointed to the clock on the mantel. "We've been working since eight."

Half-past six had struck, a single note, and he would not outstay his welcome.

"I'm coming to-morrow," he repeated.

"To-morrow's Sunday; we're not open."

"Then Monday," he cried.

"You called me a fairy just now. Fairies disappear." She looked at him again. "Now go," she ended.

He obeyed, and the two girls watched him put on his overcoat and take his hat and cane.

They went into the outer hall, where the hand with its ring on the third finger still pointed to "THIS WAY."

The flapper turned it round so that it pointed to the street.

"I drew that," she said, proudly. "Isn't that a fine diamond?"

"A magic ring," said he, looking at Lois.

She opened the front door for him. The fog, dark, opaque, and heavy, obscured the world outside.

"Where am I?" he asked. "I live in the Albert Road; if I could only get to Baker Street."

"We'll take him there," volunteered the flapper. "Shall we?" and she turned to Lois.

"If he's really lost."

"I am."

"We're like cats who see in the dark. We've always lived here"; and, "Come on, Ben!" added the flapper.

She took one arm and Lois the other.

"You'll be cold?" he asked, concerned.

"We'll run," said Lois. And laughing and running they led him through that strange, dim world, broken only here and there by a faint glow of lamplight. He was farther away from Baker Street than he had thought; but at last they arrived at the tall iron gates through which every morning except Sundays Tillinghast came into the road which leads to the station. They could hear the traffic now and see its lights as it groped and searched and blundered.

"You're all right?" asked Lois.

"Perfectly," he answered.

They dropped his arms, and he was alone now. Both girls had disappeared.

"Good night," they called out to him, and he called back, "Good night."

"Good-bye, Ben." That was the flapper.

"Good-bye." This was Lois.

And then the voices stopped and he heard the patter of their feet as they raced back again. "Till Monday," he cried. But nothing answered him.

HE stood there and watched the fog that had swallowed them, the house, and everything. He watched it for several minutes. Next he found and took the road uphill which he had sought before, the main road with the shops and houses. He reached the canal and came safely to the Albert Road, which curved to the right. He crossed it, and after some delay found his own home and Mrs. Cornish.

"So you've come back?" she cried. "I thought you was lost! You don't get them in America—a fog like that!"

"I'm sorry to say we don't," he answered, gravely.

"No accounting for tastes," said Mrs. Cornish. "But I lay you've had enough of it and'll stay home for your dinner."

"You've won," said Tillinghast.

"There's a chop or a steak and a cauliflower and potatoes."

"What's become of the cabbage?" he asked.

"I thought you'd like a change. Did you get any tea?"

Tillinghast awoke with a start. It had just flashed upon him. "Three teas," he answered, "and I forgot to pay for every one of them!"

"Then it's to be a steak?" said Mrs. Cornish.

"No, a chop," he cried. "Those poor girls! I'll make it right on Monday."

Tillinghast had danced with many partners, but never with one like this girl.
"Fairy!" he whispered.
"Mortal!" she answered.

II.

MONDAY came. At five he left the offices of his insurance company and took the train to Baker Street. As Lois had foretold, it was fine and bright and clear. Even yesterday a wind had blown which had carried away the fog, and incidentally one of Mrs. Cornish's chimney-pots, which had fallen with a crash upon the roof. The good lady was full of it. That was Sunday. He had breakfasted early and gone to spend the day with friends who lived some miles out of town. He had wanted to tell them of yesterday's adventure, but he got no farther than telling them about the fog. It had come up to all his expectations. It had exceeded them. Out here, said his hosts, it had only been white and moderately thick, not yellow and opaque as in London. Now Tillinghast was back again in Baker Street and making for a sign that said "TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS." And he must pay for those three teas. It wasn't really his fault. They had made him feel so very much at home, hadn't they? He'd say that when he paid them.

Round the park he went, looking for that sign in the twilight. They had been most unbusinesslike, he reflected. They ought to have given him a card or something which would have made his return easy. Yet their carelessness had been part of their charm, he conceded. And he hadn't been any better. He ought to have asked and made sure, instead of going off like an idiot. A happy idiot, treading on air, or was it fog? With his head in the clouds—but he'd find them.

He went clean round the park and found nothing. He left the terraces and rows of private houses that faced the iron railings and went into a neighbouring side street. His heart thumped when he read a sign that said "Teas and Light Refreshments." It was a common enough sign in London. And this was merely a shop you entered from the street, with a fat woman who stood behind a counter. It was seven o'clock and his dinner hour when he gave it up for that evening. He was sure he'd find them to-morrow.

He tried again and yet again; in wet weather, in dry weather, in weather that was indifferent; and still he could never find the house with Susan and the two waitresses. He knew the fringes of the park by heart now. He had explored every street and nook and odd corner. And the streets adjacent, and the streets adjacent to these streets. He had found half-a-dozen tea-shops, but never the one he wanted, nor had he met Lois or the flapper in the street or in the park. He had looked for them and found other flappers, other Loises, overtaken girls that seemed like them, been so hopeful once or twice; but it was never Lois and never even the flapper. It was fast becoming a mystery to which he could find no answer.

He began to talk about it now and told the whole story; of the fog, of the house, of the two girls and Susan; how he had found them, taken tea with them, and danced with them, and then been led back into the fog where everything had disappeared. It was like a story in the Arabian Nights, only he couldn't find the ending. He told this story twenty-seven times, and everybody said, "How interesting!" Except two men in the office and a lady he met at a dinner-party. She listened, and when he had done she only said, "You're an American?" The two men, more brutal, had said, "Tell us another!"

But Tillinghast didn't mind as long as people listened. Perhaps they would repeat it; perhaps in some roundabout and lengthy way it would get back to Lois. The world was so small, he argued, and he knew it for a trite and commonplace line of argument; yet, as with all such commonplaces, there was a lot of truth in it, and more than a grain of hope.

CHRISTMAS had gone and now it was January, and as January shrank and dwindled Tillinghast began to grow despondent. For next month his year would be up and he would have to return to America. And then it would all be a dream, a curious memory. He would tell people about it for the rest of his life. He felt like knocking at the door of every house within a mile of Regent's Park and asking for Lois. But that wasn't practicable. He didn't even know her surname. And perhaps her name wasn't Lois. He had only that wretched flapper's word for it. He would have to go home and that would be the end of it. He wouldn't be sorry to part from Mrs. Cornish, he thought savagely, chewing away at one of that lady's toughest steaks. But Lois! Never in all his life would he meet her equal, her charming smile, her delicate voice, the radiant kindness of those hazel eyes. He thrilled again as his mind reflected her round, slim figure, and that lovely face with its crown of red-gold hair.

A doleful and a wretched Tillinghast now waited for the blow to fall. Yet what was the good of staying on? The thing had come, had gone, just like the fog which had created it; as lost, as fugitive, as unsubstantial.

III.

IT was a Saturday afternoon and he had leisure to continue a quest that had now grown hopeless. His eyes scanned the familiar houses. They rested on the familiar pavement and strayed dejectedly to the iron railings that enclosed this familiar park. He saw without seeing, in a world become vague and formless, till suddenly he was aware of a something unfamiliar that brought him to a standstill, his nose to the ground and all his nerves a-tingle. On the stone slab of paving at his feet someone had written his name: BEN TILLINGHAST. Someone had scrawled it in chalk upon the flagstone. It stared up at him, startling and alive, just as Man Friday's footmark in the sand had once stared up at Robinson Crusoe. He looked and looked, and there it was, unmistakably. His heart pounded. Should he wait there? Should he answer? He had no chalk handy, but there were pubs and billiard-rooms. He went off to one of these, tipped the marker, and came back with a square of chalk, a pale greeny-blue cube. It would do.

He found the place under a lamp-post where she had written his name; for it must be she. He waited till it grew dark, and then, unobserved, added his address and, "Where are you?"

Next morning there was nothing and the writing was blurred by the rain and weather. But on the Monday evening and in the same place he found a hand pointing, with a ring on the third finger and the inscription, "THIS WAY."

He followed it till it came to a second hand and then a third. This last hand pointed to the front door of a private house, and in the window stood the sign he knew so well: TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS. Hand-painted on cardboard. Why had he overlooked it? He hadn't overlooked it. He had passed this house a dozen times and there had been no sign. Nor was it the kind of house where people would keep a tea-shop.

Tillinghast knocked and rang, for this time the door was shut. He waited on the step and at last the door opened, and there stood Susan, who eyed him vacantly.

"I've come back to pay for my tea," he said.

She had forgotten him.

"Three teas!" he said.

Then she remembered.

"You can't come in here."

He pointed to the sign.

She went in and removed it.

"Now you be off," she said. "If her ladyship hears of it, I'll get the sack."

"Hears of what?"

"Those goings-on."

"Then this isn't a tea-shop?"

"Tea-shop! This is Lady Mannering's house, and them two young ladies is the Misses Mannering."

"But why did they do it?"

A bright voice interrupted them. It was the flapper.

"Now, then, Susan," she cried, "are you giving us away? Come in, Ben! You got my note?—it was I that thought of chalking the pavement. We haven't been very kind to you, have we?"

She drove Susan off and seized hold of Tillinghast. Then, "Lois," she cried, "I've got him!"

A voice sounded from above; a dear, longed-for voice.

"Got whom?"

"Ben, of course."

There was a flutter of skirts, as though Lois had rushed the first flight; but she came down the stairs serenely and looked at him and held out a hand.

"You may kiss her if you like; I'll turn the other way," announced the flapper.

But Tillinghast stood his ground.

"How much do I owe you," he asked, "for those three teas?"

"Four-and-six," replied the flapper.

He found the money and paid her.

"It's mine," she cried. "I'm going to stick to it."

"What about Lois?" he asked.

"She's got you. Come upstairs now and we'll confess."

HE followed them into an upstairs drawing-room.

Lois gave him a chair and made him sit by the fire.

"I'm going to do the talking. You two are hopeless," announced the flapper.

"I was, till Saturday," responded Tillinghast.

The flapper disregarded him.

"It was like this," she began. "Mother was away, cook had a day off, and we were alone with Susan. So we two, Lois and I, and especially me, thought we'd have a lark. Lois painted that sign, 'TEAS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS,' and I did the hand and 'THIS WAY.' Then we arranged the dining-room. I was broke. We were both stony. We thought people'd come. We never expected the fog and you. We'd bought cakes and éclairs and milk and things, and had to eat 'em all ourselves. And you going away without paying—it ruined us! We fooled you rather, especially Lois. She said we were hard up and orphans. Father's in India; but we were hard up, though. I always am. We'd dragged in Susan. Poor old Susan! She enjoyed the lark. Now

she's in a blue funk. That's the real truth of it. No wonder we all disappeared!"

"No wonder!" echoed Tillinghast.

"And when you were gone we both missed you. I missed you as bad as Lois. What did you do on the Monday?"

thought that perhaps you were only fooling. We deserved it, behaving like that, dancing and all. Two little tea-shop girls! It'd last a week or so and then you'd forget us."

"You saw me looking for you?" asked Tillinghast.

"You do care, don't you?"
"More than for anything on earth," said Tillinghast.

"Looked till I was black in the face," replied Tillinghast; "and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday and Saturday and Sunday——"

"Yes, we saw you," said the flapper. "But what could we do? We didn't know you, and there was mother. She's very strict. And I had school and Lois had her exams and Bedford College. And then we

"We wanted you to look; and at last Lois said, 'I wonder whether he really means it?' And we asked mother if we could write. We know where you live. We've stalked you."

"Oh, have you?" groaned Tillinghast.

"Haven't we, Lois?"

"*You* have."

"Oh, put it all on me!" And turning

again to Tillinghast, "But when you kept it up, week after week and even after we came back from Switzerland, where we went for Christmas, and mother wouldn't let us write and Lois was growing more and more potty about you—you were, Lois!"

"No need to rub that in, is there?" asked Lois, flushing, the roses and the cream of her soft cheeks grown lovelier than ever.

"Go on, and don't be personal," said Tillinghast, severely.

"And you were potty too, and worse than ever," the flapper continued, unabashed. "And as we couldn't stick up that sign when mother was at home—she's out now, but she'll be back soon—I thought of chalking. My idea. But I'd seen it in a book somewhere. I'd thought of it long ago, but Lois wouldn't let me. Not until she was sure you really cared. We came back from Switzerland, and there you were, and Lois knew and was sure. You do care, don't you?"

"More than for anything on earth," said Tillinghast.

"Well, that's all right, then. I went out after dark and chalked in four places. When we saw you'd answered we both jumped sky high."

"Who drew the hands and 'THIS WAY'?" asked Tillinghast.

"Lois did."

"And put the sign in the window?"

"Lois."

Tillinghast looked at her and she looked back, unblushing, but, oh, so happy!

"I didn't know what to do," he cried. "I thought I was never to see you again and that it had all disappeared. Gone away like that fog!"

"So did we!" cried the flapper.

"And I've got to go back to America on the fifteenth of next month."

"We're coming, too."

"Don't be absurd," said Lois.

"But you will come some day—as soon as I've made good?" He had risen and taken Lois's hand.

"I will."

"Promise?"

She looked up and he kissed her.

"Me, too!" cried the flapper.

He kissed her as well.

In the open doorway stood a lady who was very handsome and rather tall. She had come in noiselessly and these proceedings seemed to interest her immensely.

"Mother, this is Ben—Mr. Tillinghast, I should say," cried the flapper.

"I thought so," said Lady Mannering. "I'm glad he's come. I've heard of nobody else since last November."

She looked at him, approved of him, and then held out a hand.

Tillinghast took it with enthusiasm.

"You'd better go now," she said, severely.

His face fell.

"Oh, mother!" cried Lois.

"And change your clothes—you live near here—and come back for dinner!"

Does the Public Know What it Wants?

BY

CHARLES CHAPLIN

IN the days before the films had become a leading industry and the filming of complicated stories, the building of elaborate sets, the spending of weeks in preparation, and standards of lighting and photography that prevail to-day were not even dreamed of, I was called upon to make a short comedy between nine in the morning and three in the afternoon. When I reached the studio of the old Keystone Company I was told by the director that a short comedy was needed, and needed that day. I was promised that if I could turn out the sort of picture that was wanted I would receive an extra twenty-five dollars. I had no story, I hadn't even an idea, and I had no actors, but I wanted that twenty-five.

I dashed about the studio. "I want you for the girl, you for the heavy man, and you," I said to a stunt comedian, "to do just any bit of clowning."

Then I thought of my story. A beginning came to me, and we rarely had more than a beginning in those days. The character that I play in all my pictures was to be on a bridge, standing on the rail about to jump. A pretty girl passes by, and the would-be suicide changes his mind.

The resultant picture, which was called "Twenty Minutes of Love," proved to be a fair success. The public was willing to vote it a laugh-maker, but in the filming of that crude little comedy I completely disregarded the public. I had a high regard for the twenty-five dollars, and my job was to please the man who had asked me to make the picture, and not the public.

In the progress of the screen, which has made careful planning not only possible but necessary, a great deal of the old spontaneity which made converts to the screen in the early days has disappeared. Naturally, if it is necessary to spend several hundred thousand dollars instead of a few hundred, the business man, the banker, the artist, or whoever he is who puts up the money, wants to be assured in his own mind that he has a good chance of success and that the public will respond.

And therefore we all argue about what "they" want—"they," of course, meaning the paying public. But this has created a situation which I firmly believe stultifies imagination and is a barrier to originality. When "The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari" proved a failure, although an artistic success

unquestionably, our wiseacres jumped to the conclusion that the public did not want originality. Certainly "Caligari" was original, and surely it failed, but the truth of this does not mean that the public, although it may never like "Caligari" in any guise, is lined up in solid ranks to protest against originality.

The public may generalize that they do not want a certain type—"Caligari," if you will; but that does not prove that they have a definite type in mind that they do want.

The public does not stand at the box-office window and say: "We want a drama after this pattern: Virtue shall be its own reward. Punishment shall be meted out to the wrongdoers, and there must be a happy ending, with the assurance that the boy and girl are to live happily for ever after. And there must be a nice blend of pathos and humour. Give us that, or we will stay away."

Nor does the public demand that the film comedy shall contain a good deal of slapstick, a certain number of gags—and by "gags" I mean those good old tricks that have always proved successful—three or so dashes of serious situation, and a bit of irony to top off. The public has no such specifications for films. The demands of the public are negative at best. Entertainment is what "they" really want.

Quite frankly, I do not believe that the public knows what it wants; that is the conclusion that I get from my own career. There was no idea in the public mind that it wanted to see the character that I have played in so many films and through so many situations until that character was revealed. Before I could get that character to the public I met with every discouragement. It would require quiet treatment, and what "they" wanted was robustness. It would be necessary to use make-up, and that was not effective on the screen. The public paid to see real persons as they are.

In the early days, when I made pictures for the sheer money and vicarious happiness I got out of the work, I had no responsibility, and I turned out genuine comedy. Suddenly, with no thought to that end, it was brought home to me, I may write in all modesty, that I was famous.

From that time on, at least from the time that I felt I had a reputation to sustain, I had responsibility, and my work became in most ways improved, but in many respects more studied. Finish alone, however, will not count for long. The more I thought and planned, the more I found that I was depending on the mechanism of humour and not the spirit. I was trying to intellectualize myself and to study the demands which the films were creating in the public. I wanted to please the people who were so good as to like me. I must give them what we call the "sure-fire stuff," or the things that are bound to get a laugh and often have nothing to do with the other action or the sheer exuberance of the story.

JUST about this time, when I had decided that I knew what the public wanted and my success encouraged me to that belief, I received a jolt in the form of a letter from a man I have never seen and whose name I don't even know to-day, though his letter I can write here word for word. He had seen me in "The Fireman" in a large theatre in the Middle West, and wrote:—

> I have noticed in your last picture a lack of spontaneity. Although the picture was unfailing as a laugh-getter, the laughter was not so round as at some of your earlier work. I am afraid you are becoming a slave to your public, whereas in most of your pictures the audiences were a slave to you. The public, Charlie, likes to be slaves.

This letter was a great lesson to me, and I took stock, so to speak. My work could be no good unless I got the right spirit of joy, joy in itself. And since that letter I have tried to avoid what I think the public wants. I prefer my taste as a truer expression of what the public wants of me than anything that I can fathom out of the things that I can observe, either in my own work or in that of others that are unmistakably successful. This is obviously not meant as a slap at the public, but rather at those of us who think we can tell just what "they" want, whether we are editors, theatrical managers, or business men who have commodities to sell to the public. In the eternal argument as to what is wrong with the pictures there is the recurring criticism that pictures are always alike. And they are, most of the time! If you are a regular follower of the films, or if you have seen only a few pictures, you will come to but one conclusion, and that is that in naming the best pictures you have seen you will not include five or six that are all in one field. You may like a certain actress and may go and see all of her pictures, but if called upon to select your favourites you will not place all her six pictures in your pet list. Your list will contain variety, and most often you will find that variety in something that is either very different or else is a new way of doing the old.

It must be certain that the public does not get what it wants, for the first of any new thing, type, or story, or the first appearance of any new or different personality, is almost always an immediate success. When

Douglas Fairbanks left the stage and appeared on the screen he was a success at once. He offered something new and different to the conventional type of young American that had come to be known as the screen hero. He had served in the theatre and had from the beginning great seriousness, earnestness, and enthusiasm for the films. But in his success the producers saw merely athletics, and, one after another, acrobats were brought forward to wrest his laurels from him. But Fairbanks' spirit and ability were missing, and some years afterwards the original was so firmly established in the public mind that no one bothered any longer to try to imitate him.

WHEN a new personality comes along the producer concludes: "Now that's what 'they' want—new personalities entirely. Let's get rid of the established favourites." But just then the old-time favourite comes back with a conventional or simple story that rings true, and it gets well-deserved success. But we may complicate the case still further: An old story made into a good film is produced; it made no difference what the cast was in "Over the Hills"; its story, although highly sentimental, had colour, sweep, and universal appeal.

Now where are we? And they shake their heads. The confusion is more confused, because the very next week one of the new personalities may succeed quickly, as Valentino did in "The Four Horsemen." I can just imagine how many arguments were made out of this man's success. The natural conclusion of the producer mind would be: "He's a foreigner; they are tired of American faces." In this hastily-arrived-at conclusion it is, of course, forgotten that Valentino is a good actor, handsome, and, what so few actors are either on the stage or on the screen, picturesque and natural in costume, and that his first real success was when he was cast as a young soldier in the extremely well-made film from a popular and highly-advertised novel, "The Four Horsemen."

When we had such a run on vamp films, for which I am sure there was no great demand, one or two met with success, and the deduction was that the public wanted to see such pictures, and one sinful sister followed another in machine-made stories. When four or five of these failed the producer hesitated and pondered just what was the matter with the public. It was getting what it wanted and still stayed away. There might be a sixth attempt, which was by chance a good story, and the producer would be reassured that he was right after all, and then there could be no halting of the procession of chequered careers for women.

In the early days a few costume pictures were attempted, and because they were untrue, the acting bad, and the costumes the merest apology for correctness, the plays were disastrous to the box-office. It was a stock argument that patrons would look at the billing in front of a picture-house, and if they saw costumes in those advertisements they journeyed across the street and saw some gripping modern drama where there were at least three dress suits. Along came the German film, "Passion," and it was forthwith certain that the costume picture would be worked to death.

When Griffith produced "The Birth of a Nation" in many reels the rival producers who knew to a certainty what the public wanted shook their heads. The effort was beforehand consigned to failure. The two-reel picture was the natural length. But when "The Birth of a Nation" turned out to be a tremendous success the future of spectacular films was certain and many others followed quickly. These did not come up to the mark, so—from the producers' angle—the public was tired of long pictures.

Thus every time the all-knowing person who can figure to a nicety what the public wants goes wrong. He assumes a wrong psychology to account for success: a big picture—its length; a strange personality—its newness. And when both their dope and their pictures go wrong it is easy for them to blame it all on the public's lack of taste.

I have heard directors, scenario writers, and others who are directly concerned with the shape that the moving picture shall take argue under the shadow of this great fear of the public. They begin with a good idea, and then they lose courage and deceive themselves. The consciousness of what the public will want is for them so terrific. If they do something that is a little different because they have forgotten—while filming the episode—that there is such a thing as an audience, they are in doubt about it when they stop to consider. It is difficult to consider the public secondarily, but unless the person making the picture can achieve that state there will be no originality in his work.

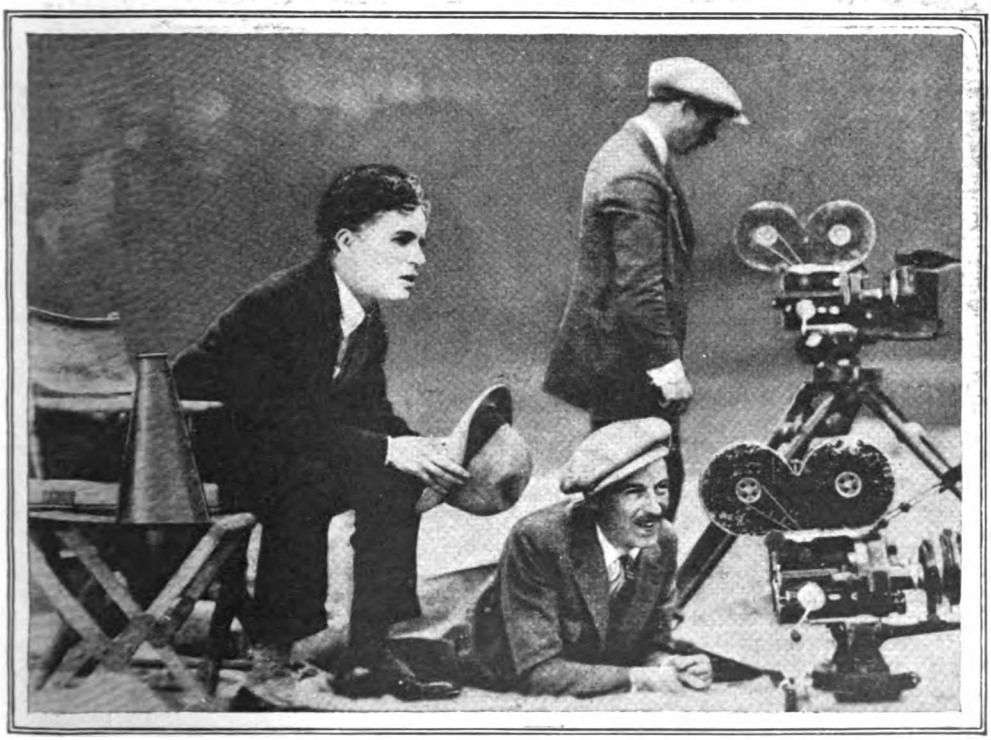
One man, who thinks that the public's taste is bad, will write down to his public, and another man, who appreciates his own sense of inferiority as a creative artist, will write up to the demands of his medium and the public. Both of the types will make mistakes, and there will be just as many mistakes up as down, just as many bad pictures from persons who know their

inferiority as from those who condescend in meeting their audiences. In no particular field is this truer than in the so-called artistic attempts, the conscious effort to do something fine.

I do not know what constitutes the so-called art picture. Very often around film studios it has meant something that the producer and the initiated like but that they fear is too good for the public. Often it is a tragedy or a picture with a tragic ending. Now there can be just as inartistic tragedies—in spite of their accumulation of woe and grief—as comedies, and the unhappy ending, which is so often in plays, stories, and pictures misconstrued for artistry, can be worse than a custard pie. Usually the unhappy ending in films is inartistic because it is jumped at and arrived at through false scenes.

There haven't been many pictures that could be called "art" pictures—and I quote the word "art"; but then, so far as I know, there are but few perfect works of art in any creative field. Without apologizing for the medium of the films—which all those of us who use it accept as an art—there is more reason for imperfection in the pictures than there is in any other field. We cannot revise as a writer may, nor correct and redraw as a painter may. There is a natural flow to the picture when exhibited, but sequences are often taken over many days. Items are forgotten, and even with the elaborate system used to check up, that is employed in the best studios, mistakes are made.

The films may have their drawbacks from the point of view of the creative artist, but they have, too, their joys; and one of the incidental joys of making pictures is that every now and then the unexpected—and at times even a mistake—triumphs. In the making of a comedy I usually leave the mistakes in, as there is a certain spontaneity, and sometimes the very recorded annoyance that the wrong thing caused may prove funny. In the making of "The Pilgrim" I was wearing a flat-brimmed clerical hat instead of my usual Derby. In walking up and down a station platform, trying to be very dignified, my hat blew off. I was much irritated, for I felt that what we had been doing was fairly good, and now we would have to take the scene over again. We did so, and succeeded in



Charles Chaplin as film producer.

"From the making of pictures I get a good deal of thrill. I get it more as a director and producer than I do as an actor."

getting the hat to keep in place; but when both sequences were run, we found that we had done the first one better, except for the one mistake.

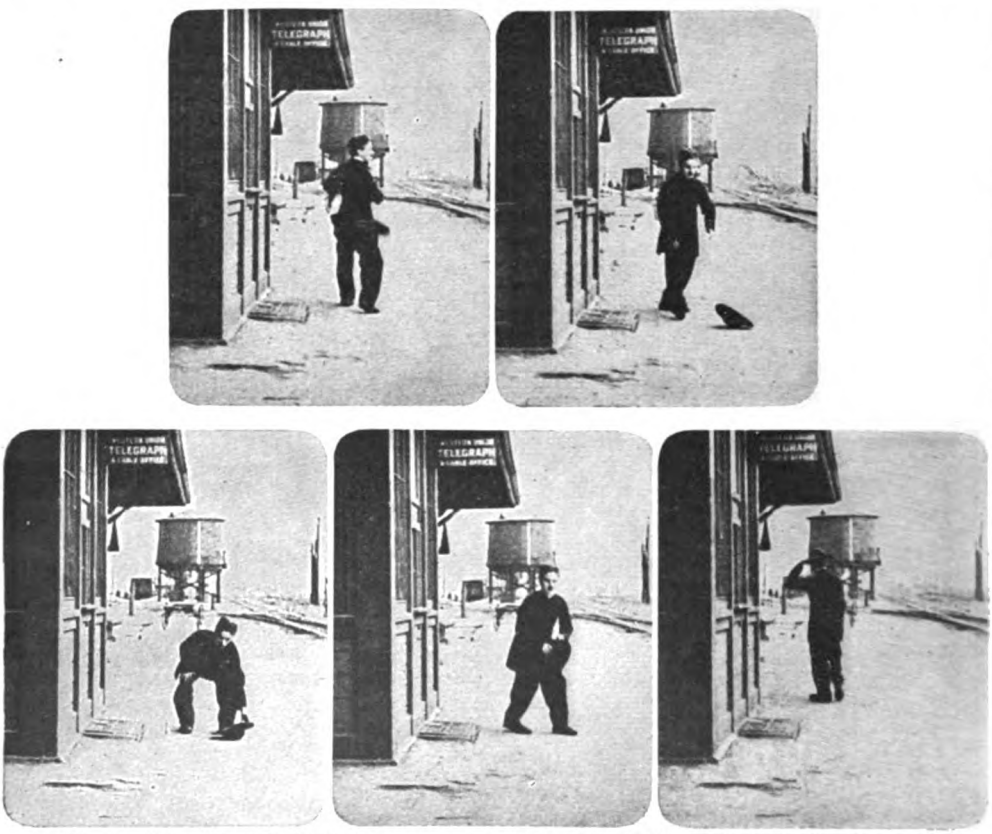
When we were showing the first "take," a stranger in the projection room suddenly burst out laughing, and it occurred to me: Why should not my hat blow off? Certainly here was the element of comedy, and I was annoyed at the accident simply because I had approached my work conventionally, as rehearsed. The camera-man insisted that it held up the action of the scene, but this mistake was retained in the picture and audiences laugh at the incident.

It seems unreasonable to me to make a picture in six or eight weeks. A fine and authentic picture would take a year to make. Even then there probably wouldn't be much art in it, and I doubt whether the man who made it would care to look at it ten or twelve years afterwards. If there were time, and we had the money, the ideal way would be to take a picture quickly and see what it was like, and then do it all over.

From the making of pictures I get a good deal of thrill. I get it more as a director and producer than I do as an actor. It is the old satisfaction that one is making something, forming something that has body. There is the photography. There are the angles of the sets. There is the day's work, making individual scenes; whether one acts in them or not, one feels a little elated when they are well done.

There are the "rushes" or "takes" of the day before to look at, and corrections to be made, and the gradual assembling of the whole in sequence as ultimately it will go before an audience.

I like making pictures, and I like acting in them; and I suppose that I shall always be a bit of film—that is, just as long as I have the money to buy the raw stock on which to take pictures.



Charles Chaplin and the hat—an amusing scene from "The Pilgrim" showing, as related on this page, that a mistake may sometimes turn out to be a success.

Photos: Pearl Films, Ltd.

THE PIPE

by

L. J. BEESTON

ILLUSTRATED BY A. GILBERT. R.O.I.

LESTROVA entered his furnished flat at seven o'clock and dropped into a chair as if his backbone had suddenly snapped.

"So much for afternoon bridge—my afternoon bridge," he sighed. "It would have discredited a dustman; it was as elementary as a nebula, and probably not as important. It has separated me from more money than I care to think about this side of bed-time. And as I signed away twice as much, last week-end, at Sir William Wildly's house-party, it becomes obvious that I must either play bridge better or—— Hullo! What untidy devil has been here?"

In front of him was a writing-desk with four drawers on either side. Each of these receptacles was open, and a lower had been pulled out right upon the carpet. Lestrova reached out to press the bell.

"Bowls!" he called.

"Don't touch it," begged a courteous voice. "As a matter of fact, however, your servant is not in."

Lestrova stared. He had excellent reason. At three yards of distance, across the desk, the narrow circle of a revolver was levelled at the space between his eyes. The man who held it, resting the weapon in the crook of his left arm, looked through two holes in a strip of black calico across the upper part of his face.

There was a silence of four seconds, then Lestrova ventured to breathe again. Mechanically he glanced towards the door, which was behind him, and he saw a second man, who also had his eyes hidden, though he showed no menace of a levelled pistol.

"Ah!" said Lestrova. "Who the devil, gentlemen, are you?"

"A natural question, Mr. Lestrova," said he with the pistol, and who maintained most of the dialogue which followed. "And put with a coolness which, the circumstances considered, prophesies well for the success of this interview. If I believed your manner to be flippant, I should preface what I have to say with a word of intense warning; but I think you understand that death may be very close to you at this moment."

Lestrova nodded. "'May be' has a hopeful note," he answered. "Am I to assume that that half-mask conceals the identity of a face known to me?"

"You have never seen me in your life. But I am not here to answer questions, but to ask them. You spent the week-end just past at the house of Sir William Wildly, in Kent?"

"That is an affirmation, and a correct one."

"You played bridge on the Saturday night, and you played again on the Sunday night. You showed your usual skill——"

"Pardon, I played execrably."

"But the luck of the cards was against you; you were unfortunate in your partner——"

"Houseman? Oh, Houseman handles his cards like a master; finesses like an ambassador."

"And, play being high, you lost much more money than you could afford to lose. Shall I mention the sum?"

"Pray do not. It is a sore point."

"You went down to 'Redpines,' Sir William's country house, on Saturday afternoon. You went in your car, and your servant Bowls, who sometimes drives your car, drove it on this occasion. You arrived at about five o'clock, and your servant

Copyright, 1924, by L. J. Beeston.

"Ah!" said Lestrova. "Who the devil,

put up himself, and the car, at the close-by inn called 'The Twin Lobsters.'"

"You are a model of exactitude," said Lestrova, putting up his heels on the desk.

"I will come now to the night of the Sunday. Play ceased early, at about eleven, when the ladies soon retired. There were left—but perhaps you will tell me who were left."

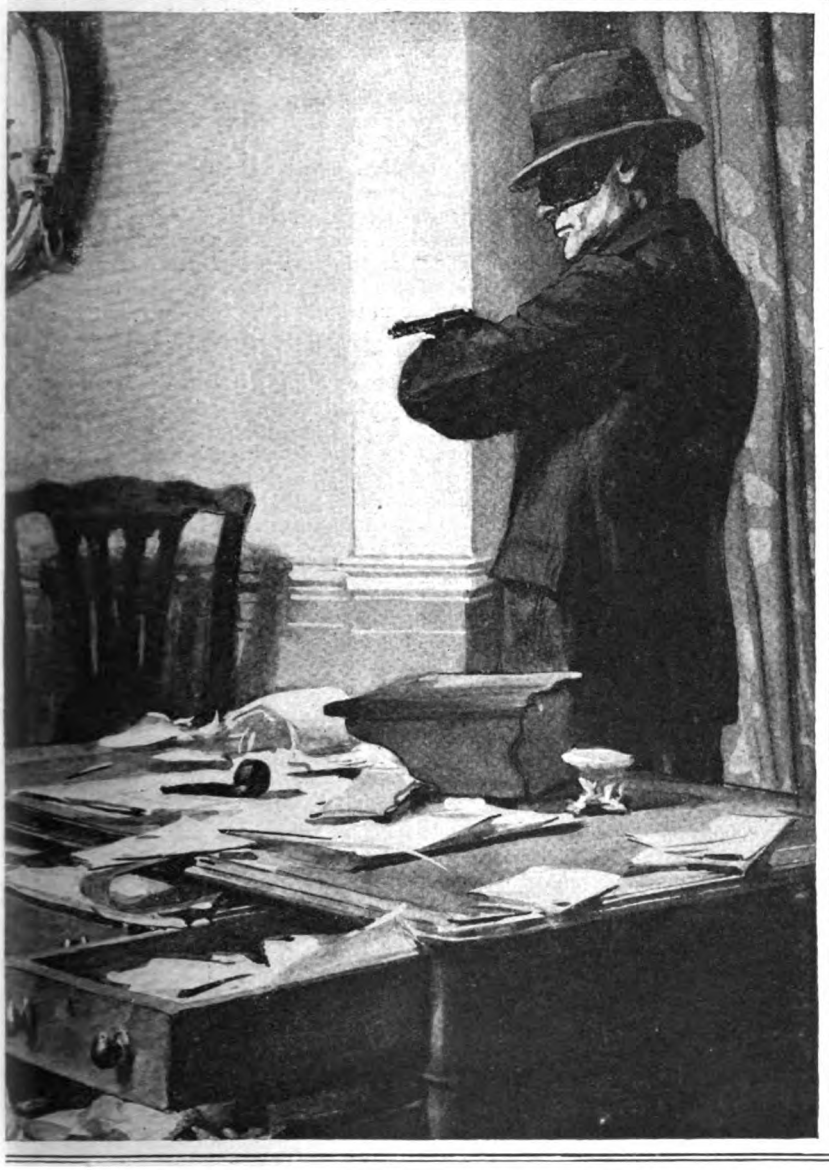
"Why should I?"

"I invite a little frankness."

"Forgive me, but where are we drifting? To what goal?"

"Answer my question."

Lestrova reflected. "Who remained? Why, there was Draper with a novel; Houseman, putting down a word-puzzle for the paper which pays him for such perplexities; Sieveking at the piano—with Houseman—brain-tortured—hurling glances of hate in his direction; and, lastly, there was Goldring telling young Brown that the



gentlemen, are you?"

next world-war will come five weeks before Christmas, and civilization explode just after Easter. That was all."

"You have not mentioned yourself."

"Oh, that was the lot I left when I went to roost."

"Yes, you went first; but not to bed. You walked your room for a full hour; your losses were on your nerves——"

"Pardon again. They should have been, but they were not."

"At two o'clock, when everyone was asleep, you left your room for the balcony upon which it opens."

Lestrova raised admiring brows. "Can a man not take a breath of fresh morning air?"

"You followed the length of the balcony, which passes three other rooms. At the extreme end is Lady Wildly's dressing-room. You were there lost sight of, owing to the foliage of an elm tree, the branches of which touch the balcony at that point. You came into view a few minutes later, returned to your own room, and did not leave it until the morning."

The speaker stopped, as if that was the end of the first chapter in a dramatic story.

"This is dull hearing," commented Lestrova. "May I light a cigarette, sir?"

"Keep your hands still, or you die where you sit. There is an element of mocking in your replies which is a danger to you. You know perfectly well the ultimate end of my observations, which I have made

merely with a view to showing you how closely we have watched you."

"Yes, I feel that I know what you are driving at—now," Lestrova answered. "I saw the news in to-night's paper. Someone got into Lady Wildly's room and stole an article of jewellery: a diamond pendant. Am I serious enough for you now?"

"That is better. Well?"

"Well what?"

"What have you got to say about it?"

"About the jewel? Why, that its beauty might well provide temptation. A single rose-cut diamond with a blue gleam in its heart. Lady Wildly wore it in rather a curious fashion: unset, save for a tiny claw at the end of a thin platinum chain."

"You are beginning to trifle again. Be very careful!"

Lestrova fixed a steady look upon his interlocutor. "I see," he replied, slowly. "You believe I helped myself to the jewel."

"Unquestionably."

"My movements on that night, coupled with my card debts——"

"Which are but a part of your debts."

"True, very true; damnably true. Yes. I see the situation. You and your friend here are jewel crooks; are possibly part of a confederacy of jewel crooks. Your system of espionage is, doubtless, a section of your methods. It is a section of the delicate webs you weave in which rare jewels are caught. You had perfected plans to obtain the very valuable gem in question, and its disappearance in the hour when your hand was almost literally outstretched to grasp it naturally was very disconcerting. I perceive now the meaning of the disturbance in my rooms, in which you have been making a search. But I did not take Lady Wildly's pendant; and I assure you that I know nothing whatever about it."

"That is a lie."

"Well?"

"Our search has been efficient. We have not found the diamond in your rooms. Your movements since that night are known to us, and we are aware that you have not disposed of it. Therefore it is on your person."

"No."

"Are you going to repeat that word?"

The answer—"I must," rose to Lestrova's lips. He checked it, for a sparkle in the eyes behind the mask told him that he was on the very edge of annihilation.

"Think again," went on the other. "I can give you a few minutes; I can give you ten. If, at the expiration of that time, you have not placed the diamond in my possession, I shall blow out your brains."

"Ah," said Lestrova, "I see that you will. That is a grim fact which I grasp entirely."

And he took his heels off the desk.

WHAT to do? Lestrova leaned back in his chair, closing his eyes. A passing surprise at his own coolness flitted through his brain. He could not dwell upon that, however. What he needed now was white-hot concentration. He appeared to be impelled along a passage which had a dead end. If it did have a dead end, then he was lost. But if there was the faintest way out he must not miss it; he must not let a flustered nerve rob him of decades of years.

That might happen so easily. Ten minutes more of life! Half an hour ago he had been playing bridge at his club in Piccadilly and had walked home in tip-top health, enjoying the evening sunshine and the company of the shopping crowds. Sounds of the voices and footsteps of those crowds came to him through his windows, and the pleasant hum of motor traffic. In ten minutes' time a bullet would crash into his brain and life go out like a candle.

This Lestrova realized perfectly. He indulged not the most slender hope that the men in his room would not push their threat to its extreme end. The glitter of the eyes watching him, the composure of the voice which had been speaking to him, showed no weakness of purpose. He was right up against stark, sheer desperation.

He said to himself:—

"If I give them this diamond I shall go out—a live man. But I haven't got it. I never did have it. Well, in that case my only hope is in finding it for them. That will want a bit of doing. That is a large order. A smart detective might find it, but even he would want time. He would want ten days—ten weeks, perhaps; and I have only ten minutes—not that, now. I can understand their idea that I nipped in before them and grabbed the jewel. The case against me, from their point of view, is a strong case. But if I am innocent, someone is guilty. Now, which member of the house-party—ah! yes, yes! I had forgotten that little incident."

Suddenly Lestrova had recalled something; he now fastened upon it with an intentness that held him rigid with concentration.

"You have five minutes," remarked the ominous voice.

Lestrova did not hear. His mind was working as it had never done in his most dramatic bridge problem.

"Three minutes!"

Lestrova's lips moved, but he was speaking to himself.

"Two!"

"Yes, yes," murmured Lestrova. "I must prove the ownership."

"One minute!"

Lestrova opened his eyes.

"Don't make so much noise," he said, quietly. "You shall have the diamond. I believe that I know who took it, and I'll get it for you."

"Fool! Do you hope to put me off in that fashion?"

"I am not putting you off. You shall have the diamond; you shall have it before you leave this room. Isn't that what you wanted? Shoot if you like, but listen to me first."

The two men exchanged a swift glance.

"Do you believe I would allow myself to be murdered for the sake of a jewel which I couldn't take with me?" went on Lestrova. "Listen. There was one small happening that night which your confederate—who, I take it, was down in the garden seeing that the coast was clear—did not perceive. It was this: on my way down the balcony I struck my foot against something. It was just outside Lady Wildly's dressing-room. It was a briar pipe. As I picked it up I noticed that the bowl was faintly warm. I feel that this pipe is going to help us. There it is, on my desk. Graciously permit me to examine it."

Lestrova put out a hand for it. The absolute steadiness of his demeanour was helping him.

"Your first thought," he continued, "will be that the pipe is mine. It is not. I never smoke a pipe. I should like to, but have never been able to form the habit. If you doubt me, look through these rooms and find, if you can, a pipe of any sort, or loose tobacco of any kind; or search my pockets. But your investigation has already proved my statement. Luckily I slipped this pipe into a pocket, meaning to seek its owner on the following morning, but it slipped my memory. It has been on my desk since.

"I was not the only one outside Lady Wildly's room that night. Someone else had been there a trifle of time before me. He dropped this pipe. Let us get after him, therefore. I say let *us* get after him, for I am perfectly willing and eager to help you to the diamond; it belongs to Lady Wildly, but—my life belongs to me.

"It all boils down to one question, which is: 'Who is the owner of this pipe?' I propose to find him, and to force the diamond from him—while you wait. If you think I am trifling, press that trigger; but you will not find the jewel on my body, and the consequences to yourself will be disagreeable.

"I have told you that when I retired I left the other men—Draper with his novel, Houseman with his word-puzzle, Sieveking with his music, Goldring and young Brown talking politics. Brown can at once be eliminated; he smokes only cigarettes. That leaves four, and they all are pipe smokers, as I know. How can I tell to which one this pipe belongs? Examination and reasoning may furnish an answer to the question."

WITH an assurance that was far more assumed than real, Lestrova pulled his chair up to the writing-desk and leaned forward over the pipe in close investigation. That his life trembled on a hair-like balance he knew perfectly well. He had quite a good clue, and a good deal might be done with it—if he had time in which to get his hearers interested. If his coolness had shaken the others' conviction as to his having the jewel actually upon him or near to him, then a shred of hope remained. They might listen to him; they might give him time at least in which to make an attempt to locate the prize. On that all depended.

"At the least sign of hesitation, of blenching, out goes my light," ran Lestrova's thought.

A certain cold sensation in the centre of the crown of his bowed head came hard upon the idea that it was at that point the bullet would enter.

He continued, with intense deliberation:—

"I have no difficulty in crossing out Sieveking's name from the four remaining. This is a well-seasoned pipe; it has either been in use for a considerable period or smoked a great deal. Sieveking could not smoke a strong fellow like this; he has not the head or the nerves; it would make him sick. I rule the delicate Sieveking from my list.

"That leaves us Houseman, Draper, and Goldring. We are closing in."

Lestrova breathed more freely. The chilled sensation in the crown of his head began to die away.

"The next name for elimination is Draper's," he continued, after a pause. "You will see that the extreme end of the mouthpiece is almost bitten through. The smoker has not only a strong head; he has strong teeth. Now I know for a fact that Draper has artificial teeth—or some artificial teeth. They are apparent when he laughs heartily. Now a smoker who has a dental plate hardly marks the stem of his pipe, and never bites it through. He could not if he tried. He has not the jaw-power."

And Lestrova repeated to himself, like a faint echo of his words: "Has not the jaw-power."

He still lived. His perfect nerve, or his reasoning, might yet get him out of the pit. He felt that the second man had stepped farther into the room and was watching his movements and harkening to his words, evidently interested.

"This leaves us with the names of Goldring and Houseman," went on Lestrova, turning the pipe round and round, speaking from the depths of deduction. "One of these two is the owner of this piece of damning evidence. Which one? Both have strong heads; both have sound teeth. This was an expensive pipe; it is of the finest French briar root; but that does not assist us, for both those men can afford a decent pipe."

Still he turned it about in his fingers, not hurrying, not embarrassed by an enforced pause.

Suddenly he went on:—

"And yet I find that still closer investigation will bring us to a final choice. The user of the pipe has not treated it as its super-quality demanded. It betrays an element of human carelessness. The bowl is deliberately encrusted with deposit; and worse—much worse, the fore part of the edge has been to some degree burned away. The user clearly filled it with spirit at one time, for cleaning purposes, and allowed the spirit to set fire to the edge of his pipe. This not merely evinces a certain carelessness on the owner's part; it shows ill-treatment and lack of proper fastidiousness, for no one who loves his pipe taints it by burning spirit in the bowl—and methylated spirit, too, for the smell yet lingers.

"Now I am quite sure that Goldring is not the man to maltreat an expensive briar in this fashion. He is more than fastidious; he is finicky; extreme tidiness is one of his strong—or weak—points. On the other hand, Houseman is markedly Bohemian in his habits, and in this regard is a typical contrast to Goldring. Beyond question, this pipe could never belong to the latter. We find, therefore, by a simple process of elimination, that Houseman is the owner. That being so, he it was who was prowling on the balcony that night. The assumption is not weakened by the fact that his financial status is probably the least robust of the men we have discussed; his work is painfully hard, and his responsibilities are many."

LESTROVA had finished. He ran a finger up and down the stem of the pipe and kept his eyes lowered.

The man behind him, who had hitherto kept silent, said:—

"It may belong to Sir William Wildly."

"No. Sir William smokes cigars only—at half a crown apiece."

"Or to one of the servants of the house."

"No. The servants have a wing to themselves, and one of them would not come smoking a pipe to steal a jewel from his mistress's room. The act was not premeditated. Temptation suddenly loomed up before the smoker, and he yielded on impulse."

A long silence ensued. Lestrova did not look up. He knew that the men were exchanging questioning glances, deciding his immediate fate.

"If they doubt that I have the diamond," he said to himself, "they may snatch at a chance of getting it."

Suddenly he who had done all the talking commenced again.

"There is probably nothing whatever in what you have said," he remarked, dissatisfied and suspicious. "But if it were true, if Houseman has the pendant, how can you make good your boast and force it from him?"

"Quite easily. He will take instant fright, and will readily let go—on terms of safety to himself."

"It will take time."

"Minutes only. I will send him a letter."

"A letter?"

"Yes, and so worded that it will attain your object, and mine, and give no subsequent trouble to anyone. You can send it to him by your friend here. His address in the Charing Cross Road is scarcely five minutes' walk. In less than double that time you shall have the diamond. Allow me to put down the letter for your inspection."

From a leather case on the desk Lestrova produced a sheet of note-paper. He commenced to write, pausing at intervals for reflection. When he had finished he handed it across for examination, observing quietly, "That will hit the mark. It will make him deadly afraid. Remember, it was an act of impulse. He will let go of the jewel as if it were a cobra."

The letter ran as follows:—

Please give—asking no questions—to the bearer of this letter, who is sent to you by Edward Lestrova (acting for the owner), the trinket in which you showed an unfortunate interest. No charge involving grave unpleasantness will follow an effectual and instant restoration.

By the time that Lestrova's visitors had finished reading the letter he had addressed an envelope.

"Send Houseman that note and you will get your diamond—or, rather, Lady Wildly's diamond," said he, and the mild joke emphasized the confidence that he felt.

The men drew aside a step or two, whispering together. The fellow with the pistol kept his eyes fixed upon Lestrova, who was now venturing upon a cigarette. He growled, with a still distinct menace in his tone :—

" You seem very sure about it."

" I am absolutely certain."

" All right; but understand that I do not intend to go away without what I came for."

" You shall go away with the diamond in your pocket."

" I hope so—for your sake." He whispered again to his companion, handed him the letter, and the man vanished.

" Take a cigarette," said Lestrova, indicating an open box.

The visitor accepted, lighting it with his left hand. He pulled a chair to the writing-desk, opposite Lestrova, and sat down, crossing his knees. He kept his weapon levelled upon the tenant of the flat and maintained a silence that was perhaps sullen, perhaps suspicious.

" You might now put that thing aside," suggested Lestrova, pleasantly. " A loaded revolver never looks kindly, I think."

There was no reply.

" I must congratulate myself on picking up that pipe, and still more in neglecting to restore it."

" That remains to be seen."

" Oh, I am without doubt."

" A quarter of an hour has passed."

" That is not much."

" But you said ten minutes."

" Approximately. Then I had forgotten the evening traffic; the streets are congested."

ANOTHER spell of silence followed, during which Lestrova helped himself to a second cigarette. His visitor, by an almost imperceptible fidgeting, betrayed a growing uneasiness. At last he exclaimed, springing to his feet :—

" By ——! this has gone far enough ! "

With but a fraction of a second between him and the dark Lestrova answered, unexcitedly :—

" All right. I keep my promise. The diamond is here ! "

He put out his hand for the pipe, picked up a little silver paper-knife on the desk, inserted the point in the bowl, jerked out a wad of tobacco, and shook into his palm Lady Wildly's missing jewel.

" Take it," smiled Lestrova.

He had almost heard the wind of death roar past him.

The visitor was not slow to accept. So near had he been to the edge of murder that his fingers trembled and his breathing made a husky sound. He examined the stone with feverish eagerness.

" That satisfies you ? " chuckled Lestrova. " Pardon me if I indulged a human weakness by putting off this big moment till the very last. I caught a glimpse of the diamond in the bowl of the pipe while I was examining it before you here. Until then I had not the least idea of its presence. Obviously the purloiner tugged it clean away from the delicate setting of the chain. He showed hasty action—the result of inexperience. He thrust it into his pipe, which was no bad hiding-place, jabbed in a bit of tobacco, and cleared out. Unluckily for himself, his flustered nerves affected his movements, for, instead of dropping the pipe into his pocket as he made his exit, he, without being aware of the fact, let it fall upon the balcony, where I found it. All that is very apparent."

The eyes behind the mask flashed with triumph.

" I see, I see ! " cried their owner, permitting himself the relaxation of a grin. " And Houseman is still searching frantically for his pipe—this pipe."

" Not he ! " laughed Lestrova, rubbing his palms.

" What do you mean ? "

" Why, it is not his pipe ! Never was. Never will be. Dear old Houseman wouldn't steal the head off a pin."

" Oh, he wouldn't, would he ? Then what sort of game——"

" Listen. It is packed with interest. The ownership of that pipe was known to me this morning, when I first gave it more than a casual glance. Why, then, did I try to fix it upon my friend Houseman ? That is easily answered. Because I wanted to gain time. As I said, I had no idea that the diamond was inside the briar until I had pursued my investigation and deduction for some time; and then I went on with both for two reasons: one, because I found it amusing and instructive—and you must allow that my logic was not at all bad, and might have earned a name for a police sleuth. My second reason—but that can wait a moment. You are bursting to know to whom this pipe really belongs. To my servant."

" Bowls ! "

" The identical name. I have been keeping it for him, but he is missing. We can understand why, can we not ? He apparently took fright when he discovered his loss; dreaded his pipe being found, with the stolen diamond in it. I knew it was his because I gave it to him myself last Christmas. There is a little disc in the mouthpiece which is the trade mark of a certain firm of makers; that, and the shape, and the fact that I have seen him clean

it with methylated spirit, made me recognize it. The rascal must have left his nest at 'The Twin Lobsters,' scaled the balcony at Lady Wildly's house, and pinched the pendant. You know so much about my affairs that I suspect you have used him as a fount of information. But it seems that you should have watched him since the theft, and not me. However, you have the diamond. Are you content?"

"Yes. You talk like a damned cool one, and you think you are pretty smart——"

"I do! I do!"

marvellous at that kind of stunt. Now, that note I sent him. You observed that it took me some time and thought to fashion it. Well, as he never had the diamond, the letter must have seemed, on a first reading, like Greek to him; and then, instinctively, mechanically, he would peer into it for a hidden meaning, an enigma, scenting one of his everlasting word-puzzles like a dog a rat. And there it was, staring him in the face: the oldest and simplest of acrostics: the first letter in each line forming one word—the fatal word—'Police!' My cry for

There was a wild and ineffectual shot, and the crash of his body as the officers bore him down.

"But you were within a hair's breadth of overreaching yourself. Instead of wasting your time by writing and sending that letter——"

"Ah, wait—wait! I have not given you my second reason for writing. By deduction I made the pipe seem to belong to Houseman. That was important. I told you that he ekes out a living by supplying word-puzzles for magazines. He is

help. Did he rise to the occasion? Yes, by Heaven he did! Down with that pistol! Two police officers for a whole minute have been at the open door behind you!"

The fellow spun round; there was a wild and ineffectual shot, and the crash of his body as the officers bore him down.

"I win!" roared Lestrova. "Hullo, Houseman! You, too? Good lad! Good lad!"

POSTPONEMENT

by

J. C. SNAITH

ILLUSTRATED BY
A. C. MICHAEL

A WEAK, anxious voice was speaking. "You're sure it's all right this time? I don't think I can stand another postponement. There's been two already."

The woman arranging flowers in a blue and white china bowl on a small table near the bed gave them one last touch; and then she turned to the man who lay upon it. "Yes, darling. This time it will be all right." Her gentle voice had a maternal note. She might have been soothing a child. The same deftness which had given beauty to the meagre, poorly-furnished room now smoothed the pillows and the counterpane.

"Kiss me, Em." The voice was very faint. "Just for luck." The man in the bed felt kind, firm lips on his forehead and sighed deeply. "What a one you are! Without you we couldn't have begun to put this thing through." For an instant George Vane gave himself up to an exquisite sense of accomplishment and to the peace which it induces. And then the old torturing doubts returned. "If, after all, it fails—I'd better not have waited for the verdict!"

"It is not going to fail."

He could hardly see the outline of his wife's face, he could hardly see anything, but her courage thrilled him like certain chords of music. Brave woman. It was the thought of leaving her penniless, with two small boys to clothe, to feed, to educate, that made the simple act of dying so painfully difficult. Her future, their future, all depended on a single cast of the dice. How like her to proclaim, in the gallant voice that might not have had a care in the world, that this desperate throw could not fail! But George Vane knew better. Life had burnt a knowledge of failure deep in his heart.

"Doesn't do to be too sure." There came another turn of the screw. "It's not reasonable to expect the luck to change so suddenly now that I'm at the end of my tether."

"It would have changed for you years ago had there been in the world such a thing as justice."

"But there isn't! In this world there is no justice. That's the awful part of it." A man broken on Fate's wheel was speaking. His torments and his aches were the proof of his words. An artist's slender hand, much wasted by disease, lay in the capable fingers of his wife. She was a rock for his weakness, this woman. Wonderful grit was in her, the spirit of never-say-die. She was very near, the hair he loved touched his cheek with a live caress, but all that he could see were the twin stars which glowed in the centre of her eyes.

"If only we can hit the target on Thursday night I'll be content." It was as if George Vane sought to propitiate Fate. "Doesn't seem much to ask, does it, after what we've been through. Five years of war—and then, on the top of it, five years of hell. Still, there are plenty of others in the same boat."

"Not with your talent."

"Yes, with my talent. And bigger. Much bigger. The bottom's out of the theatre. It's a luxury trade. And it's in the wrong hands. People of taste don't go near it now." Again his doubts were coursing him. Coursing him horribly. "My stuff's been too good—too good for the bounders who sit in judgment. That's why, Em, you mustn't think for a moment that Thursday evening is a certainty. You look on this wonderful chance as sent by Heaven. It may be. But as far as we humans go, my experience is that God just laughs in His sleeve."

Copyright, 1924, by J. C. Snaith.

A frightened look crept into the eyes of Emily Vane. "Hush, darling, hush! Please, please don't say such things."

"No use pretending. War and the theatre between them have killed my faith. Weak, I know. But I can't help it. I've never been quite big enough to stand up to life. This one-hell-of-a-muss in which I have had to hustle has always been too much for me. Pretty contemptible. But I see all that now—among the other things." Torn by defeat, he pressed his thin hands to eyes that were almost sightless. Slow tears crept through his fingers.

Emily Vane, for whom this broken struggler was just a weakly child, gathered him in her arms and soothed him like a mother. He had suffered so much, hypersensitive creature that he was, that her every wish was now merged in the desire that he should suffer no more.

"Dear heart," she whispered, tenderly. "Even Mr. Pybus says the play simply can't fail."

"Can't fail!" It was a dying man clutching at straws. "He says that—Pybus himself?"

"Yes—himself. And you know how cautious all theatre managers are."

At the note of reassurance in her voice the shuttle gave one twist more in the tormented brain. Could Pybus, the shrewdest manager in London, really have said that? He never seemed to have a failure. The news was incredible. But even the mere production, at long last, of one of Vane's many rejected plays seemed too good to be true. And for its success to be assured, with his wife and family wholly dependent upon it, just as he was quitting: no, such things did not happen. And yet—if there was any justice in the world! But there was no justice.

He began to sob feebly in his wife's arms.

"There, there, there!" Cool fingers stroked his forehead. Vane fought hard to control an unmanly weakness, but the will was going.

"Everything is bound to be all right," said his wife's low, firm voice. "Mr. Pybus says so. Wait till Thursday evening and you'll see."

MR. P. BERRINGTON PYBUS sat in his private office, at the top of his best theatre, in St. Martin's Lane. He was feeling "good." For one thing he was smoking a long cigar, but there were other reasons for a diffusion of the sense of pleasure. This new play was a sure thing. Once again he had spotted a winner. His luck continued right in. Three of his theatres were turning money away from the doors. A fourth was about to find itself in that happy predicament, or you could call P. Berrington Pybus a Dutchman.

Luck, of course, was not quite the word. P. Berrington Pybus complacently fondled the expensive cigar from which particular blend he had drawn many a sound inspiration. No, luck was hardly the word. After all, there were such qualities as judgment, savvee horse-sense, mind-reading power. P. Berrington Pybus had them.

He had them undoubtedly. What a capital cigar! On his way home he would order another hundred. P. Berrington Pybus was likely to die a very rich man. Having once found the knack of making money you couldn't help it. Yet perfectly simple, if you knew how to get to the back of the sloppy, half-educated, half-baked mind of the——

"Yes, Miss Day? What is it?"

The door of the sanctuary, whose thick glass was marked "Private," had opened. A rather dainty little blonde, who moved well and spoke nicely, entered with the air of a young and modest sultana invading the presence of the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid.

"Yes, Miss Day?" The Caliph shifted the capital cigar to the side of his mouth. As one who held the gorgeous East in fee, he sat back in his revolving chair.

"A lady, sir, to see you."

"To see me—a lady?" The Caliph folded his hands over his ample white piqué waistcoat. "Odd. To see me." He looked incredulous. "Has she an appointment?"

"No, sir—no appointment."

"What name?"

"A Mrs. George Vane."

"Vane! Vane! Mrs. George Vane! Never heard of her. An actress?"

"I should say not."

"Kindly tell her that I only see people here who have obtained an appointment through my business manager."

"Yes, sir, I have told her that. But she says she absolutely must see you."

"Must!" The Caliph turned the cigar over in his mouth. Must was a strong word. "A lady?"

Quoth the sultana, after a slight pause: "Not, sir, what *you'd* call a lady."

A further pause. And then the Caliph: "Well, she'd better write to Mr. Jennings and state her business."

"Very good, sir." Miss Day reopened the door of the private office and modestly withdrew.

Vane! Vane! No, Mr. P. Berrington Pybus had never heard the name. Some girl hunting a billet. But a nerve, mark you, to track him through the vestibule of his

best theatre, up all those dark stairs, three long flights, to the very threshold of his privacy.

Soon the door opened again. Miss Day returned, looking a trifle anxious. "Yes, Miss Day?" A slight frown perplexed the shrewd features of the potentate.

"She refuses, sir, to go away until she's seen you."

"Refuses!"

"It's a matter of the greatest importance."

"What sort of a matter?"

"Won't say, sir—but she says she simply must see you."

The Caliph looked at his watch. His object was partly to see the time, partly to gain it. Like most successful men, he had an objection to being hustled. And there was Miss Day to consider. So far as she was concerned he had no need to worry about his own prestige. But it was wrong of the Mrs. George Vanes of the earth to shatter his peace in that way. However, the rehearsal was not until five. He was at a loose end for the next twenty minutes, although he was only half through a really capital cigar.

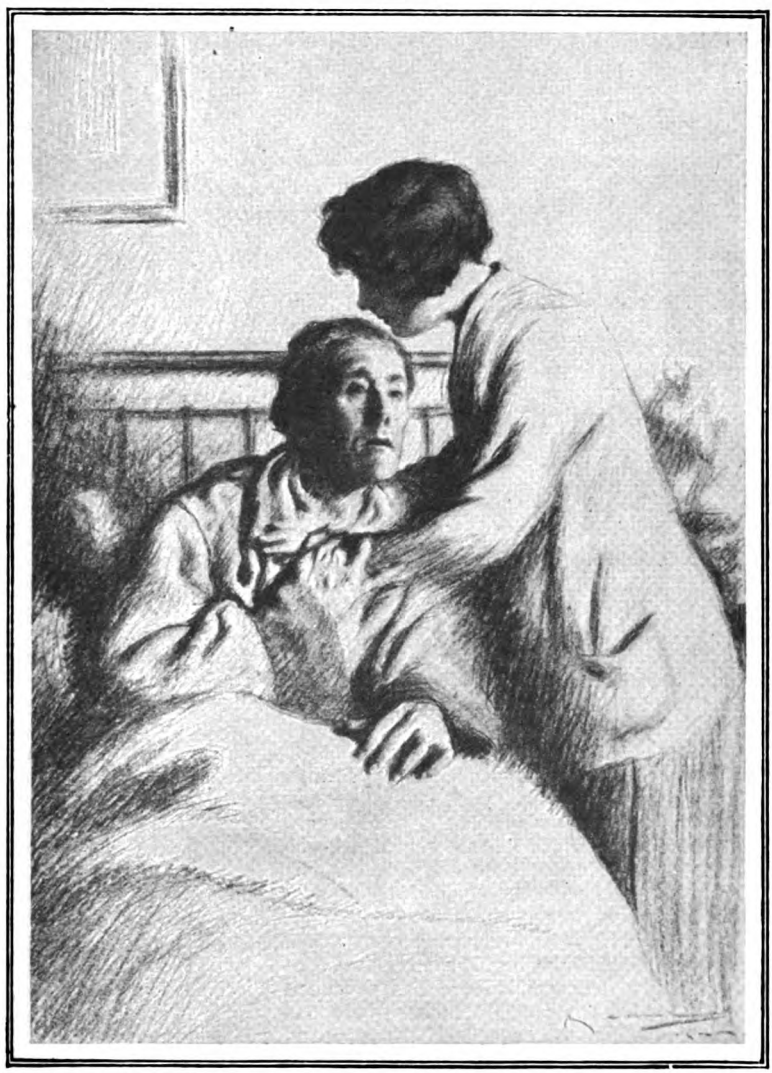
"Better see the woman, I suppose." The voice of the Caliph sounded very dubious in the ear of the sultana. "But not, you say, a lady?"

"Not, sir, what you'd call a lady."

There was a firm delicacy about the distinction, which the potentate approved with a sleek smile. "Well, show her in."

A minute later Haroun Al Raschid was confronted by a slight, refined-looking woman of about twenty-eight. But her face was so worn that it was difficult even for an expert in the sex to tell her age with certainty. In some ways it was quite a remarkable face. That is to say, the eyes were remarkable. They were large and yet deep; a curious grey with flecks of blue in them; rather like the sun in January in the Mediterranean. Somewhere P. Berrington Pybus had seen those eyes before. Yet for the life of him, although his memory for such things was singularly good as a rule, he could not, at that moment, say where.

"Won't you sit down, Mrs.—er—Vane?"



"Dear heart," she whispered, tenderly. "Even Mr. Pybus says the play simply can't fail."

The great man indicated a chair augustly, while Miss Day, deftly withdrawing, gently closed the door.

Mrs.—er—Vane sat. "It's so good of you to see me."

Error the first on the part of Miss D. The child, evidently, had something to learn. Even if the clothes of the visitor were distinctly shabby they were very well put on; and the voice unmistakably was educated. And he had heard it before. Still, for the life of him——

"Tell, me, Mrs.—er—Vane, where have we met?"

But the memory of the great man was not often at fault. Suddenly it leapt to his aid. "Why, yes, of course, I remember you now." Years ago, as stenographer and typist, she had been in his employ. Her name was not the only thing about her that had changed since those far-off days.

The anxious eyes lit with pleasure that, after all, he was able to remember her.

"Miss Norreys, aren't you? Left me to get married, eh?" The Caliph's speech was kind. A good-looking girl in those days, but rather prim and strait-laced. Since then he had prospered amazingly, and she, quite obviously, had not. A dangerous experiment, marriage. P. Berrington Pybus, whose thoughts in the main were *ad hominem*, felt a warmth of inward satisfaction that so far he had been astute enough to avoid that snare.

"Well, Miss Norreys—I mean—Mrs.—er—er——"

"Vane."

"What can I do for you?"

EMILY VANE plunged at once into her amazing story. In certain respects it was the most fantastic P. Berrington Pybus had ever heard. For a man of his astuteness it was peculiarly hard to accept. He was more than half inclined to suspect a trick. Yet told as this woman told it, with a queer break of a rather wild voice, and in the eyes her entire soul, to imply deliberate faith was equally difficult.

"My husband is dying," she began. "He enlisted in the first month of the war and he went right through, but it left him a nervous wreck. Ever since he was demobilized he has been incapable of continuous effort. Too much has been taken out of him. Always highly strung and constitutionally delicate, Nature has revenged herself by killing him by inches. He has been bedridden for the last three years. The most terrible part is that, although he could not walk across a room, his mind has remained vigorous and unclouded. To keep it from preying upon him, and to provide for the education of our two boys, he has taken to writing plays. Before the war he had regular work as a journalist. Even at that time he had written several, not one of which was produced.

"Since his breakdown he has written or dictated at least half-a-dozen, but they have not brought in a penny. None of the managers to whom we sent them was in the least interested. One or two went so far as to say they were good of their kind, but were not a commercial proposition. That may be so, Mr. Pybus, but my husband is convinced that if only some manager could be induced to give one of them a fair chance at a West-end theatre with an adequate cast there is no reason why it shouldn't succeed. Knowing that his days were numbered, he has worried terribly. Lying in his bed day after day, half paralysed and his eyesight nearly gone, it has been a torment of Tantalus. His sole occupation is to listen for the postman in the hope of good news. But the only news we have had has been the return of a manuscript with a curt letter of refusal, and it isn't all managements who trouble to send back the script.

"Day by day, as I say, he has been getting weaker. And the suspense has been torture. He firmly believes his work to be good, and the attitude towards it of the people who run the London theatres has embittered him. Coming on the top of his sufferings in the war, which he has felt more keenly than men less delicately organized, it seems to have destroyed his faith in things.

"About a month ago his doctor, after seeing him, told me privately that George, at most, had a fortnight to live. And then, Mr. Pybus, I did a thing—I did a thing——"

There had been several minor breaks in Emily Vane's story. But now there came one more poignant. Her voice fell suddenly away. She pressed her hands to her ashen cheeks.

P. Berrington Pybus was not a man who yielded readily to emotion. But there was a kind of grim fascination in the anguish of this girl whom he had once employed. Patiently he waited for her to go on.

"I did a thing, Mr. Pybus, for which I hope God will forgive me. But I'm not sure that He will. And that is why—and that is why I have come to beg you to help me."

Again the halting voice broke off. The implication that P. Berrington Pybus of all people might have influence in High places left that rather cynical gentleman feeling a little queer. "What was it you did?" His curiosity had been keenly aroused.

"That evening when the postman brought another refusal and George asked me to read the letter to him, because he could no longer see to read it himself, I couldn't

stand this senseless torture any longer. I told him that 'Postponement,' which we both consider his best play, was going to be put in rehearsal at once by you, Mr. Pybus, at this theatre. It was a stupid lie, but as he had such a short time to live it seemed quite safe; and it seemed such a kind thing to do.

"The pleasure it gave the poor boy, the relief it brought, the hopes it excited! Even now I'm not sure that silly lie has not justified itself. All in a moment it gave him back his faith in life. And that, of course, was where Nemesis came in. George knew he was dying, but the wonderful news enabled him to fix his will. He made up his mind to live for the first night, so that he might have the verdict before he went. You see, in spite of everything, he believes so in this play. And he so wants our two boys to have a decent education.

"Having something to live for, he has already gone a full fortnight beyond the doctor's estimate. It is wonderful what the mind can do. I've been put to shifts of all kinds to bolster up the original lie. For one thing, I've given the play the ideal cast. How we have discussed it and what letters I have written to you, Mr. Pybus, at his dictation! And it is owing to Miss Ferris, whom we chose for leading lady, being down with influenza, that the first night has been twice postponed.

"The first night, alas, is the difficulty. It is now definitely fixed for next Thursday. I daren't postpone it again. He might suspect. Yet what I am going to do on Friday morning I simply don't know. If he lives till then he is almost bound to realize the truth. And rather than he should do that I'd prefer to die myself. It would be too cruel. He has always trusted me. I cannot bear that he should die broken-hearted."

EMILY VANE told her story very simply, yet with real poignancy. Plainly terrified of the trick she had played, she had come in the last resort to her old employer with an appeal for help.

But what could he do? The strange tale and the manner of its telling had touched his heart. It was impossible to doubt that every word was true. Yet so short the time, so desperate the predicament, what could anyone do?

"What's the doctor say?" P. Berrington Pybus, above all, was a practical man.

"He thinks I've done a very wrong and wicked thing." The distraught wife covered her eyes. "Of course I never dreamt when I began that it was going to keep him alive—alive in his agony. But the doctor says it's a perilous thing to play with souls. And I suppose it is."

"You bet it is." P. Berrington Pybus spoke with gruff kindness. It was not pleasant to see this woman suffer.

"The doctor says any sudden shock is likely to kill George. And I am praying now that it will come before Friday, when he is bound to learn the truth, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"A way can be found of keeping up the illusion. But that seems impossible. If only he could die to-night! I can't bear to think of his knowing the truth."

For a moment it seemed as if the overdriven nerves were going to snap. But the voice of P. Berrington Pybus, calm, kindly, and firm, kept her together. "Well, after all, you acted for the best, didn't you?"

"Yes; but the doctor blames me bitterly. He says it's playing with souls. And to be keeping him alive in such awful suspense with mere lies that are bound to recoil——"

Again she covered her eyes.

"There, there, no need to take it too hard." P. Berrington Pybus was fifty-six and a bachelor, but he retained the power, in a crisis, of being decidedly human. Cynic as he was in regard to the world and its affairs, there was something about him that was large and solid and sagacious. "I wouldn't worry too much about that doctor if I were you. He said a fortnight, and it's now more than a month. Old fossil can't forgive you for making him look a fool."

"Oh, no, he's quite right. It's a wicked thing to have done. And when George finds out it'll simply be like tearing up his soul by the roots. You see, he's lost his faith in everything. And this'll be the last straw."

P. Berrington Pybus grew uncomfortable. It was a rum go. A very rum go. He didn't like to see a woman with that look in her eyes. Fine eyes, too. His inspired cigar had gone out. He relit it. Then he proceeded to smoke fiercely.

"Why did you come to me?" he asked, breaking an abrupt pause. The answer was perfectly direct. "I came to you because, in the circumstances, you are the only person who can help me."

"I? Help you?"

"To keep up the illusion."

"How can I do that?"

"I thought if by any chance I could persuade you to come and see George, and just let him hear your voice saying that everything was all right, and that the play was bound to succeed——"

"Yes, but how is that going to help—when there is no play?"

"It may help to tide us over these next few days. And if I can only convince him that the play is a winner he will be easy about the boys and his mind at rest."

P. Berrington Pybus thoughtfully turned

over his cigar. By nature he was an extremely cautious man, and this scheme, to say the least, was fantastic. Never had his heart been so touched as by this distracted creature whom he had once employed. If he could be of use to her he

"There should be a copy here."

"When was it sent?"

"Nearly two years ago. And it has not been returned."

"Odd!"

"It has been applied for several times."

"Why did you come to me?" he asked. "I came to you because,

would be; but that was no reason why a man of plain common sense should venture upon the unpractical. When she had grown a little calmer, he said: "What did you say was the name of this play?"

"It's called 'Postponement.'"

"Has it been submitted to me?"

"Oh, yes."

"Funny I don't remember seeing it."

As Mr. P. Berrington Pybus did not see one per cent. of the plays submitted to him, it had been "funnier" perhaps if he had remembered.

"And not returned. Odd!" An outsize in dissemblers, P. Berrington Pybus. He solemnly wrote the word "Postponement" on his blotting-pad. As he did so the clock on the chimney-piece chimed five. He was reminded of his rehearsal.

"Oh, if only I can persuade you to come and see my husband!"

As the great man rose from his chair it almost looked as if the woman in her distress was going to fall on her knees before him. But he remained quite calm. He felt that he must not commit himself in such a strange

affair, but if Mrs. Vane would leave her address he would think matters over. And if he came to the conclusion that there was anything he could do to be really helpful in such a difficult case, why, he would be only too glad! At the same time, this must not

"I'm just going to look in at that rehearsal. But I shall be back in an hour. In the meantime, I want you to ferret out a play called 'Postponement,' by George Norreys—er—I should say, George Vane We should have it somewhere. I want to

in the circumstances, you are the only person who can help me."

be taken as a promise. Yet, as far as P. Berrington Pybus was concerned, the door was not absolutely closed.

The distressed visitor quite understood. It was not a matter to be decided off-hand. Only natural that Mr. Pybus should need to think it over. She wrote her address, by request, on a scrap of paper. And then, with tremulous thanks, she walked with difficulty out of the office of her former employer.

As soon as Emily Vane had passed away down the dark stairs the great man summoned his secretary.

take it home with me, so that I can look at it to-night after dinner."

THE next day, about twelve o'clock, a car replete with every modern detail drew up before Number Sixteen, a tiny house in Garrick Crescent. It was probably the smartest turn-out ever seen in that modest north-western suburb, which had no pretensions to fashion.

A ring at the front-door bell caused Emily Vane to glance through the sitting-room window. She was expecting the doctor.

But plainly this was not he. The distinguished figure of P. Berrington Pybus, set off with spats, a gardenia, and a piqué waistcoat, was visible through the curtains of the side window.

"It is so good of you to come," was her greeting. She ushered the great man into the little sitting-room.

P. Berrington Pybus was an acute observer of things in general. And as he entered he was struck at once by the fact that this room had hardly anything in it in the way of furniture. There was not even a carpet. It had recently been sold to pay the rent.

"Oh, please sit down." Emily might have been doing the honours of a drawing-room in Park Lane.

Mr. Pybus sat on the least fragile of the only two chairs the room contained. "Well, I read the play last night after dinner." He came at once to the horses, in the style of an accomplished man of business. "There's good work in it. But I doubt whether it's on broad enough lines to fill one of my theatres."

"But you do see the beauty and the imagination?"

"Oh, ye-es." As a practical business man P. Berrington Pybus had not much use for beauty and imagination. It was out of other commodities that he had made his money. "But these are dangerous things, you know. In theatre-land they generally spell ruin."

With resignation Emily accepted the inevitable. It was no more than she had expected. But since Mr. Pybus had taken the trouble to come all the way to N.W.14, she felt that at all costs he must be bent to the more instant purpose in her mind.

"You will come upstairs and see my husband, won't you?"

It was what P. Berrington Pybus was there for. A situation oddly dramatic had stirred his feelings in a most singular way. He admired enormously the courage of this woman. And the story she had told had somehow appealed to his sense of sportsmanship.

UPSTAIRS in the front bedroom, looking on to the quiet street, lay the author of "Postponement." If appearance meant anything the end was almost a question of hours. Hearing a heavy tread in the room, Vane, who could no longer see, said in his weak voice: "Hullo, doctor, here you are again!"

"No, George," said his wife. "It isn't the doctor. Mr. Pybus has come to see you."

A flush of joy crossed the emaciated face. George Vane extended a wasted hand. "I don't know how to thank you," he said, "for all that you are doing for me and mine. They say miracles don't happen. But to me it is a miracle that such a man as yourself should come to believe in a play like 'Postponement,' just as I am handing in my checks."

The stark simplicity of the words almost seemed to clutch P. Berrington Pybus by the throat. He coughed a little awkwardly and shifted his weight from the left leg to the right.

"My wife tells me," the weak voice went on, "that you have advanced two hundred pounds on a five per cent. royalty, even before the contract has been signed. That's very handsome of you, Mr. Pybus. I doubt whether another manager in London would do that, particularly in the case of the first play of an unknown man."

There was a pause. "Oh, but my dear fellow——" It was not often that P. Berrington Pybus was at a loss. But for the life of him he couldn't get beyond those spasmodic and inadequate words.

"Then, too, the cast you are giving it." The voice was hardly more than a whisper, but a strange fervour lent it warmth and quality. "Ideal, Mr. Pybus, is the only word. If that cast can't get away with it there's none that can. So sorry, by the way, about Miss Ferris. I do hope she'll be all right for to-morrow night. Two postponements already. Perhaps the third time will bring us luck."

P. Berrington Pybus shifted the weight from the right leg to the left. He had the look of a well-nourished carp. "You bet it will, old boy." There may have been a slight lack of conviction in the tone, but there was no lack of friendliness.

"The part is so vital. All the time I was writing it Miss Ferris was in my mind. And then Evans, too, as the young soldier-man. He'll be great. I said to my wife, 'We can't hope to have Miss Ferris *and* Evans *and* Miss Clay *and* that rare old card, Tom Devenish, all in the same play.' But she said, 'Ah, you don't know Mr. Pybus when once he sets his hand to the plough.' And she was right. I didn't. You deserve to succeed for your generosity and your pluck. And—and—if I may say it—for your judgment and your insight. For I honestly believe—if you'll forgive me for bucking—that this is a good play."

P. Berrington Pybus felt embarrassed. But he was able to murmur: "So do I, my boy, so do I." And he blew his nose with violence.

"Honestly—you think we shall be all right on Thursday night?" The sightless man raised himself on his elbow in his effort

to read the face of London's most successful manager.

"I do." P. Berrington Pybus hoped God would forgive him; but there it was! "Yet, of course, to be candid, the literary merit of a play is no guarantee for the box-office. In fact, in my experience it's rather the reverse."

"Oh, yes, I know." There was a quick fall of the anxious voice. "But we mustn't talk of failure. We simply can't afford to think of it. You see, there's my wife—and the two boys."

"Quite. But there's no reason to anticipate anything of the kind. With such a cast failure is a shot that isn't on the board."

"You are right. I feel sure you are right." The man in the bed sighed gratefully. "But the theatre being the place it is, and the public taste having gone to pot since the war, I shall not feel happy until I know what the newspapers have to say on Friday morning."

"The newspapers!" There was a sudden queer restriction about the chest of P. Berrington Pybus.

TWO mornings later the smart car was seen again in Garrick Crescent. As the great man, with a sublime gesture, opened the wooden gate of Number Sixteen, two small boys came out of the house. They looked very trim and clean and well cared for; and they bore a strong resemblance to their mother, who stood behind them in the doorway. At the sight of the visitor her wan face was lit by a smile of welcome.

"So good of you to come again, Mr. Pybus. How can I thank you?" She spoke with the bright, determined cheerfulness of brave people who are up against it. A little proudly she indicated her nice-looking boys. "This is Michael. And this is John."

Michael and John stood to attention and doffed their hats like little gentlemen. They were awed by the inevitable white spats and the gardenia of the Caliph, and by the magnificence of his car, but as far as they humanly could they were careful to hide their feelings.

Said their mother: "They are going to the Oval to see Hobbs get his hundred." She might have added, but did not, that a kindly neighbour, lover of cricket, was paying for this rare treat.

P. Berrington Pybus had been no mean cricketer. In fact, he had played for Cambridge in his day. "Are they, by gad?" A chord had been touched by those bright, alert faces and by the evident devotion of their owners to the king of games. "To the Oval. That's a long way. If they'll wait for me I'll run them down in the car. And I might possibly be able to get them into the pavilion."

It was an epic moment in the lives of John and Michael. To drive in state to the Oval in the car of Haroun Al Raschid; to sit in the pavilion like *bonâ-fide* members! Their breathless thanks were cut short by the disappearance of the genial Caliph with their mother into the front sitting-room.

"Well, how goes it with the patient?"

"I—I can never thank you enough, Mr. Pybus." Tears of gratitude welled slowly in the eyes of Emily Vane. "It's—it's so sporting of you."

"Not at all. Only too glad if in any way I have been able to help you out." A great spirit, this woman! "By the way, I've turned over that play to Ramsden, my manager. He agrees with me that there may be something in it. Shrewd feller, Ramsden. And funny thing, y'know, that little talk we had, the author and I, the other day, rather got me thinking. Gave one a sort of new light, as it were. Ramsden can see Miss Ferris in the part. And so can I. It so happens that she's under contract with me until 1928. That might be one of her big parts. And if we can get the rest of the cast together, as your husband suggested, and I dare say we can, there may be more of a punch in the play than at first sight we suspected. Last night I read the script again. It sort of grows on one. Plays, you know, are funny things. But so is life, if it comes to that. At least, that's my experience."

That was also the experience of Emily Vane. But at the moment she had neither time nor inclination to discuss it. Her head was full of something else. "I can never thank you enough for your kindness to George. You don't know what you've done for him. Won't you come up and see him again?"

As P. Berrington Pybus entered the meagre but spotless front bedroom a radiance was upon it. The morning was really ideal for Hobbs to get his hundred. A strong pure light washed everything. And it was reflected in the sightless eyes of George Vane, in which the light that never was on sea or land now shone.

"That you, doctor?"

"No, old man, it's me."

"Pybus!" A curious glow was in the face, a ring of triumph in the voice. "God bless you, my dear friend!" Nerveless fingers were extended upon the coverlet. "I wanted Emily to be there last night. But I couldn't persuade her to leave me, and she was quite sure it was going to be all right."

"So was I, old boy, so was I."

"But even you, with all your experience.

could hardly expect it to make such a sensation. Yet with that wonderful cast, even a weak play would have pulled through. However, you are going to have your reward."

"Not a doubt of that, dear boy."

"You've seen the papers?" The voice now was a mere husky whisper.

"The papers?" P. Berrington Pybus was out of his depth. For an instant he was off his guard. But with the eyes of the wife fixed upon him in their intensity he pulled himself gallantly together. "Why, of course I've seen them," he lied, robustly.

Said the voice of faint triumph: "My wife's just read them to me."

"Read the papers to you, has she?"

"Yes. And they're unanimous. *Times, Morning Post, Westminster, Mail,* they're unanimous that it's the play of the century."

P. BERRINGTON PYBUS glanced in bewilderment at his former secretary. From her his puzzled gaze travelled to a small table near the foot of the bed. A sheaf of newspapers lay upon it. Beside these was a sheaf of hastily scribbled pages. P. Berrington Pybus had need of further support. He was out of his depth again. Once more his gaze was fixed upon the wife. But it was left to the man in the bed to supply the clue. "Funny thing." The voice, still triumphant, was now very low. "A coincidence. But A. B. W. says in *The Times* almost the identical words my wife used last night in this very room."

"What was that, old boy? Dam' fine notice all through, I thought."

"Why, he says that without any disparagement of Miss Ferris, whose performance was magnificent, he shall not be content until he has seen the part played by Duse."

"Some words for A. B. W., I must say." Once more P. Berrington Pybus was nearly caught napping. Again he pulled himself powerfully together. "An idea, by Jove! It hadn't occurred to me. Duse, as the wife, might be enormous. I must talk to Ramsden."

There was a further brief pause; and then the decisive voice of Emily took charge of the situation. "Please don't forget, darling, that the *Morning Post* says it would be gilding the lily to try to better Miss Ferris."

P. Berrington Pybus took up the tale robustly. "Quite right, Mrs. Vane. Those were the words of the *Morning Post.* And the *Westminster*—or was it the *Chronicle?*—said pretty much the same."

Said Emily: "Wasn't it the clever critic of the *Daily News?*"

"They're all clever." A sigh from the bed. "God bless 'em. God bless 'em. They little know what they've done for me and mine. Do you know, Pybus, what you and the Press together have made me feel this morning?"

The voice was so far away that P. Berrington Pybus had to bend closer to the pillows. "You've made me feel that, after all, the fight has been worth while. The mud, the blood, the blackguardism, the beastliness—I don't say I could go through it again—but there's a meaning behind it somewhere. When you kept having to postpone the first night because of Miss Ferris—give her my love, God bless her!—I began to think that even this was one more illusion, one more miss-fire. But as I say, somewhere beyond the beyond, poor old muck-trodden humanity, that is always being kicked through the slaughter-house, has a Friend."

"Quite right, old man, quite right." Awe was in the voice of P. Berrington Pybus, but this seemed the thing to say.

"Bend a bit closer, Pybus—dear good chap. You'll keep an eye on my girl, won't you? A woman in a million. 'Tisn't until a man's up against it that he begins to realize what a woman is. The way she's stuck it! And then the two boys. I'd have liked Michael—good head, that boy—to go to Cambridge—and Jack to Dartmouth and then into the Navy. But, of course, all that's out of the question. Still, Pybus, it'll be something to have a man of the world standing behind them to see that they get a square deal."

"Why, of course, old man, of course. And talking of deals, if one gets a really big play going many things become possible."

"I suppose so." The words could hardly be heard. After its final spurt the flame had begun to flicker.

"To show you what I mean. Will you believe that before ten o'clock this morning we fixed up a deal with the libraries for twenty thousand pounds?"

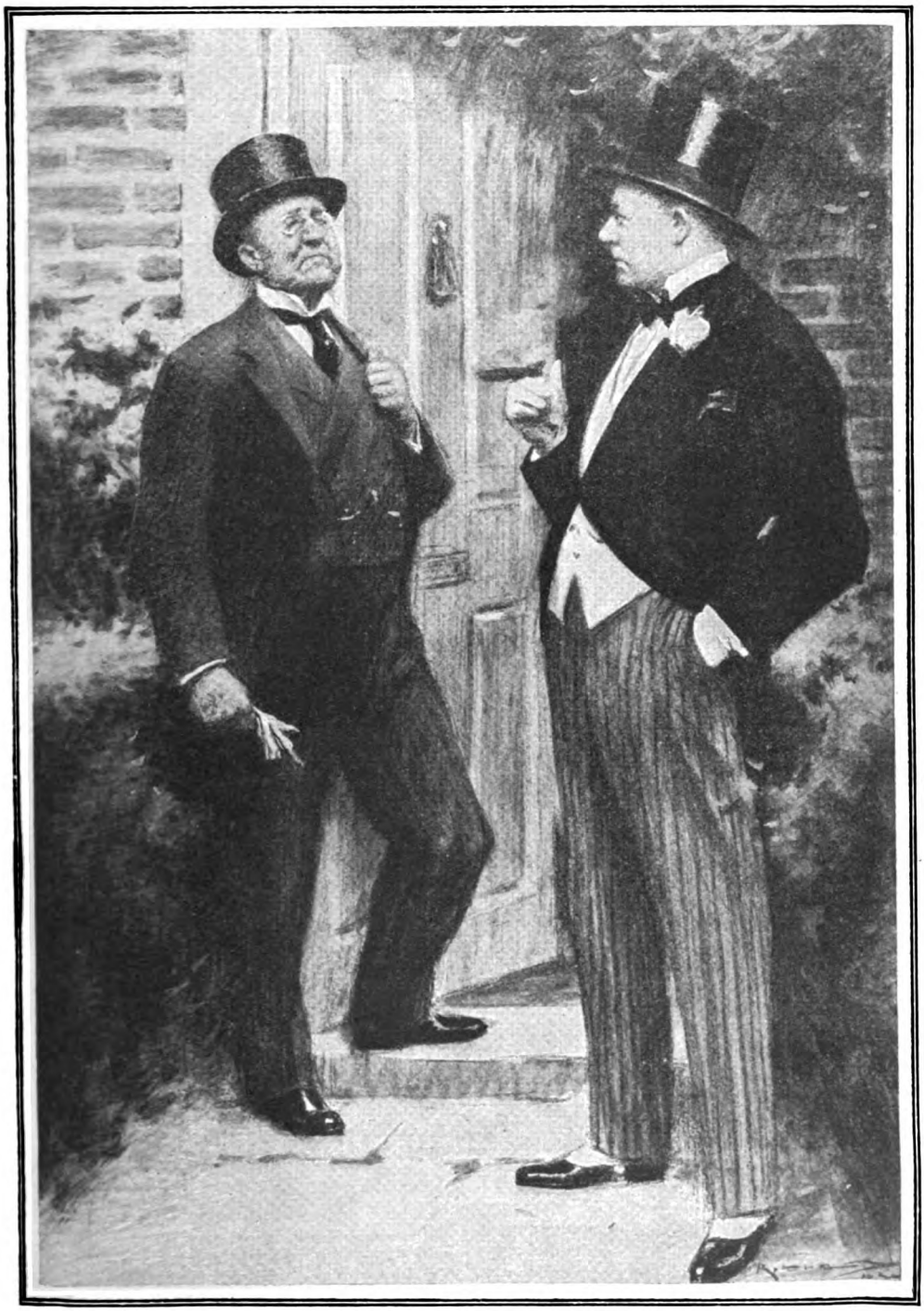
There was a sharp intake of breath. "Twenty thous——"

"And mark you, that's before the thing has had time to get really started."

"Twen—thou——"

Suddenly the bed began to rock. Sounds arose of violent choking. "George!" Instantly his wife held him in her arms. "Speak to me, George! Oh, speak to me!"

Almost before P. Berrington Pybus could rise from the bedside it was all over. Never had he seen death at quite such close range. In spite of the clear, bright sunlight, a subtle feeling of horror pervaded him. Yet as soon as he had tiptoed out of the room and had closed the door



"You're the doctor, I expect?"

The wearer of the antiquated top-hat nodded rather grimly. As the two men passed each other a secret hostility looked out of the doctor's eye.

reverently, it was succeeded by a stronger, more wholesome emotion. An illogical sense, akin to triumph, took possession of him as he went cautiously down the shabbily-carpeted stairs.

Passing through the tiny hall, he opened the gimcrack front door. A rather portly, rather elderly personage in an antiquated top-hat stood upon the step.

"You're the doctor, I expect?"

The wearer of the antiquated top-hat slowly took in the gardenia, the piqué waistcoat, the spats. Then he nodded rather grimly.

"Better get on upstairs, doctor." As the two men passed each other a secret hostility looked out of the doctor's eye.

However, P. Berrington Pybus was not going to take it lying down. He faced suddenly about. "Excuse my saying so, but our friend Mrs. Vane, in the exceptional circumstances, has been absolutely right. Absolutely right. She's a wonderful woman, take it from me. You gentlemen these days are getting to know a great deal, but there're still a few things left for science to teach you."

MICHAEL and John had made friends already with Sam the chauffeur. They were discussing at great length, yet with earnest politeness that gave salt to a most fascinating inquiry, the respective merits of Hobbs, Hendren, and "young" Jack Hearne. "But you never seen that Australian feller, Macartney." Sam was a real connoisseur. "Mine's Macartney all the time. Still, as I say, Jack 'Obbs is good enough."

A long moment stood P. Berrington Pybus in agitation and perplexity. And then very slowly he reached a decision.

"Jack Hobbs good enough." It was the voice, valiantly genial, of that excellent sportsman, the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid. "Good enough, eh, Jack Hobbs! I'd say so. Now, my boys, jump in. Won't take long, Sam, will it, to get to the Oval if we make a short cut down West End Lane? Be there in time to eat a good lunch, anyway. John can sit in front. And Michael with me. Lucky to have a day like this so early in the season, what?"

Entranced, John and Michael got into the amazing car of the Caliph. They had never seen such a car. And the Caliph himself was quite the most charming man they had ever met. He seemed to have taken a liking to them both.

"Next week-end you must let me run you down to my cottage in the country. And you must persuade your mother to come too."

That would be splendid. John and Michael leaped at the idea. But there was Daddy. They were afraid that Mother would never be able to leave him. And then said Michael, the one with the brains, speaking with shy diffidence: "Did Mr. Pybus think that poor Daddy, if he was well enough, could come too?"

"Why, yes, certainly he can—if he's well enough." But for all he kept up his voice so bravely P. Berrington Pybus made a sudden dive for his handkerchief.

The dive was vain. All the places about his ample person in which the article was known to lurk were drawn blank. Impatience overtook him. That infernal handkerchief he simply must have. But the grim truth was already upon him that on that morning of all mornings, by some kink of fate, he had left the damned thing on his dressing-table.

What a discovery for the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid to make at such a moment!

Next month:

"The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy,"

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE.

In this delightfully humorous story the inimitable Jeeves finds his way to Wembley!

The Criminal as an Inventor

by

EDWARD H. SMITH

ABOUT the year 550 the Emperor Justinian turned smuggler. Silk had been reaching Europe since before the Christian era, from China, in the caravans of the traders of Iran. The first came to Greece from Cos in the shape of a tissue so fine that "it revealed rather than clothed the form." Later the raw product began to reach Rome, where it was more valuable than its weight in gold. Always it had been carried west by the Persian merchants, who were said to have gleaned enormous profits from the traffic.

But nothing came to Europe except the fibre or the woven tissues of the East, and silk remained a mysterious, even a fabulous stuff, wherein shone the moonlight of great deserts and the spilt blood of swart alien men. So for almost a thousand years.

Then two Perso-Christian priests reached Constantinople and the attention of Justinian. They had been proselytizing in China and now carried back with them something that must have been regarded as more precious than converts—the secrets of silk culture. Justinian was told what Aristotle had vaguely guessed at. Immediately his imagination glowed. He commanded the missionaries to return to China and bring him back some of the eggs of this wondrous worm.

But how could that be done? the priests protested. To take the silkworm or its egg out of China was an offence for which generals and princesses had paid toll to the headsman.

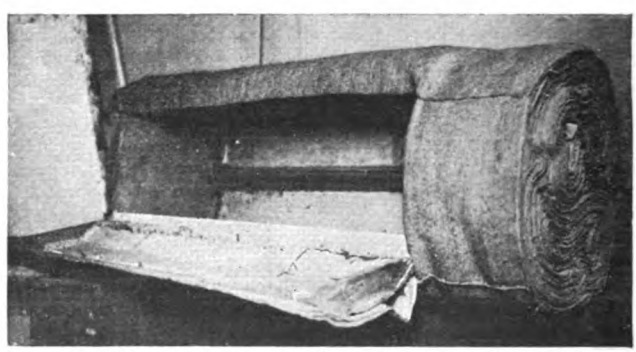
Justinian pointed to the bamboo staffs his informants carried. Were they not hollow? Could not the eggs of the *bombyx* be concealed therein? So the Christian missionaries went forth, stole the eggs of the forbidden silkworm, smuggled them across Western Asia as the emperor had suggested, and so brought the rearing of the most valuable of fabrics to Europe.

THE story of the imperial master of Byzantium and Rome cannot pose either as a rare example of crowned criminality nor as the first case of inventive talent applied to crime, but it serves well enough to introduce the subject of the artfulness and inventiveness of the criminal in every time and age. Smugglers have surely not been the least ingenious of men in this direction, and Justinian's improvisation of the bamboo egg-carriers can hardly be rated high among the inventions of this crew. When one considers how gems have been smuggled out of Golconda and South Africa by nude natives; how such bulky products as salt tobacco, and tea have been constantly dealt in where the Governments held a monopoly or enforced a heavy impost; with what generality of success diamonds are brought into this country from abroad, the handling of a few insect eggs becomes insignificant. One thinks of the false-bottomed trunks, the hollow heels and walking-sticks, the concealed seams and pockets in women's clothing—all the thousand and one artifices that come to the attention of our Customs men every year. One must recall, also, the enormous business of liquor smuggling that is to-day one of the most remarkable political and social problems of America, and consider the thousand artifices and special devices employed therein. Drug smuggling is, however, the most interesting and baffling field of this crime now in existence, and to it most of the ingenuity of the modern smuggler is devoted. To attempt a recital of all the curious devices used in the traffic would be to reprint the newspaper accounts and the photographs of the illustrated papers covering the last half-dozen years. Every-

thing from a false top in a hogshead down to a false back in a woman's watch has been tried.

A great many of these contraptions have not been created by criminals at all, but devised for legitimate use and then converted to misuse. Many devices employed by gamblers were made up for the innocent performances of parlour magicians. The tools of the forger and counterfeiter of paper currency are those of the engraver, paper maker, and accountant. Bank and safe burglars have adopted nitro-glycerine and the acetylene torch from industry. But, in addition to these, there still remains a considerable body of mechanical and other creations, of which Justinian's hollow staff is an instance, and which belong to the "crook" himself.

The largest field belongs to the burglar. A complete statement of all his creations would involve a history of the art of breaking and entering, surely one of the oldest among men. One wonders immediately what tools the Egyptian grave-robbers used who broke into the pyramids some five thousand years ago, and into the rock-hewn crypts in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings eighteen hundred years later. Probably nothing more formidable than bronze chisels and hammers and boundless patience, wherewith to work a way through enormous thicknesses of stone.



Outside—an innocent roll of cloth; inside—the smuggler's delight!

Nor may curiosity quite pass by the tools used by classic housebreakers against those crude, strange locks that closed the houses of Greece and Rome against the wandering thief. Indeed, there is reward of information on this topic for the patient researcher in every civilization, however lost in time. To every tribe there has come property, and with it the thief. To every hamlet, every half-barbarous village, advancement has brought the permanent dwelling, and with it the breaker-in. Thus locks were ushered into the world, and by their token burglars' tools.

IF we look at a collection of the tools of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century housebreaker they seem most fascinating. It cannot be said that they differ greatly from the implements of other mechanics. They do, however, belong distinctly to the inventions of the criminals themselves. We see among them a great assortment of skeleton keys, used to open the warded locks of the late nineteenth century, and still effective against the simpler bolts of to-day. The tools of coiners, also, look like ordinary implements, but criminals used them first and devised them in this form. Most men are familiar with the weapons known as knuckle-dusters. These, and their deadly relative, the skull dagger, are the inventions of roughs, and have no honourable prototype.

There is also in existence a photograph of the tools used by Charles Peace, whom many writers upon criminal subjects seem to regard as a most remarkable and masterly housebreaker. The tools are interesting because they show the home-made implements of fifty years ago for contrast with the finished devices and mechanisms used by burglars to-day. Perhaps the popularity of Peace as a notability rests on some such ground, or, more likely, upon the facts that he owned and loved to play Cremona violins, that he was a giant fellow, an irrepressible amorist, and in due time a victim of the gallows, for shooting an interfering and contumacious husband.

The inventions of prowlers, as housebreakers are called in the argot, may not, however, be limited to such men and times. Before Peace's day an American breaker had invented the dark lantern or bull's-eye, from which all the modern electric flashlights have been adapted. Wooden wedges, with which to attack the mortar in brick or stone walls without causing the ringing sound of a steel chisel; hammers capped with thick pads of rubber, to further deaden the sound of blows; the jemmy and its child, the collapsible jemmy; the fine steel wedges used in working a crack into the jamb of a bank safe to admit of the infiltration of nitro-glycerine; the fine-spun ropes of silk by which burglars let themselves down from the roofs of tall buildings to gain entrance through a window two hundred

feet from the ground and a hundred or more from the roof—all these and many more belong to the burglar's inventive domain.

Far more romantic, however, than these instruments used for breaking in are the inventions employed for breaking out. The strange contrivances which imprisoned men have bent to the great purpose of freedom must form a thick chapter in any volume presuming to contain even the first colour of the romance of escape. We need not concern ourselves here with the file that Casanova had smuggled to him in a great pie, with the familiar saws and cut bars, with the ladders of torn bedling by which men have scaled walls against freedom. No vitality shines from such commonplaces.

He marched out of prison without a word, the turnkeys accepting him as a carpenter without question.

But where these familiar things leave off the strangeness begins. Incarcerated men have picked up bits of wire in the yards, shops, or stables of prisons and fashioned from them picklocks by which scores have been liberated. A bit of rusty tin has been taken and by prodigies of labour and patience wrought into a tool to set at naught all the precautions of warders and prison architects. In 1846, Louis Napoleon, a prisoner in the fortress of Ham for his *opéra-bouffe* invasion of France a few years earlier, let his aides, who were permitted to live in prison with him, get the prince up in the clothes of a workman. So attired, he took a long, wide plank on his shoulder, stuck his riding boots into big sabots, and marched out of prison without a word, the turnkeys accepting him as a carpenter without question. Six years later the same escaped convict was Emperor of the French.

This exploit was emulated a good many years later at Dannemora by no less an offender than the celebrated Soap-box Hardy, who quickly slipped on the uniform of a painter which had been left hanging in the clothes-room. Picking up a brush and pot, he, too, walked blithely out into the sunshine and golden air of freedom.

A few years ago an American convict escaped by the old manner of cutting through his bars. He was at liberty only a few weeks or months when the police picked him up and returned him to his shadowed house. The prison officials, as is common in such cases, demanded to know where the man had got his saw. He shook his head with dejected doggedness and said he'd used none. Guffaws among the warders. Still the man blinked, held himself in a kind of stupor, and insisted that he had not used a saw, that no one had smuggled such an instrument to him, and that he had been without accomplices. The keepers menaced him and applied their tongue-starters. Their victim bore the pain as best a man can in silence. They tossed him into the dungeon, where he lay groaning but spoke no word.

Eventually the many won another of those

struggles which the ego seems destined to lose. The escaper gave sign that he was willing to talk. They dragged him from his hole and he shuffled away to the machine shop, where he looked about and finally picked up a bit of twine. This he dipped into the gluepot at the far end of the building, where the carpentry was done. He carried it dripping back to a steel table where some emery was lying about and twisted his sticky string in the powder. As it dried the bits of emery held fast and he had a moderately effective contrivance for an immoderately patient and determined man. He said it had taken him three months to cut through the bars in this fashion. The officials believed him and so set down the case upon their books.

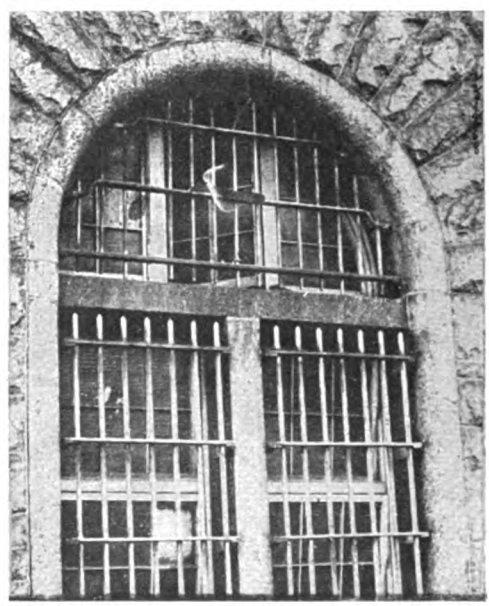
They put this remarkable escaper into another cell and took precautions against the abstraction of twine and glue and emery powder. Nevertheless, at the end of about three and a half years, the same man again made his escape and his bars showed that they had been cut through in exactly the same manner as before.

The prison intelligences began to waken at this. The man had not had access to glue or emery or twine this time. As a matter of fact, he had before the previous escape been employed in a quarter of the prison which must have made it impossible for him to visit the shops and get string after string of glued emery. The convict had hoaxed them.

This time they did not get the bar cutter back, but his story is well known among the underworld *élite*. The man had used nothing but woollen strings carefully drawn from the rough stockings furnished by the State. These he had moistened in his own spittle and then rolled in the dust of his floor, sticking them against the stones of his cell wall till they had partly dried. With these frail strands he had attacked the inch-thick steel bars.

At night, when he had been locked in his cell and the lights-out signal given, this giant of patience had crept from his couch and begun pulling his sandy string back and forth across a bar. It took many nights before he made an impression, taking a few swipes at the bar, then listening intently for the rubber-shod footfall of the roundsman, then swiping again at the cage, till the night was half spent. He got little sleep. They worked him hard in the brickyard. He lost weight and grew ill. Still he did not give up. He suspended his work for a time, till strength returned. At last he had one of the two necessary bars cut almost through, so that a quick wrench would jerk it from its place. He smeared the cut with earth and lime and touches of green paint and red brick-dust. And so he attacked the second.

The prison officials did not suspect him. They made cursory examinations of his cell, but did not sound the bars. Besides, this man was an emery user and he had none!

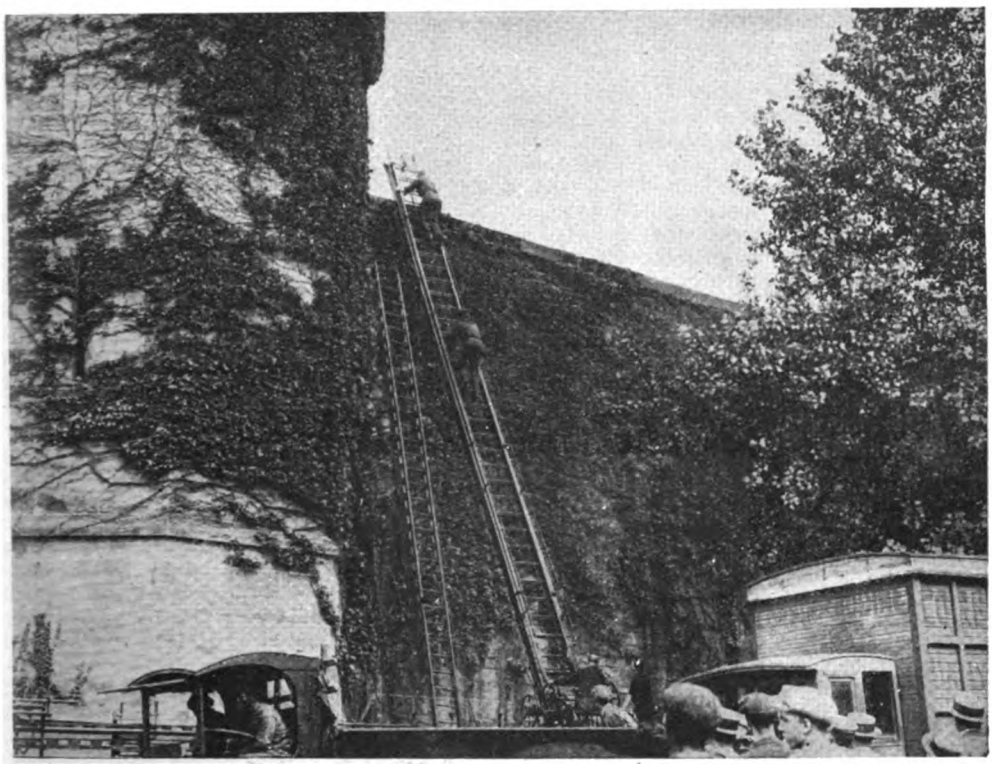


The irregularity in the bars, made with an improvised crowbar, at the top of this picture is not very conspicuous, but it was sufficient to enable two men to escape.

Slowly again then, like the drop of water on the slab of granite, like frost and thaw at the heart of a crag, like time itself against the mountains of the world, this insuperable man went on to cut the single bar that stood against his freedom—a thing most likely empty, a mere word. It took him almost all of three and one-half years to do this deed of forfeit valour and sublime tenacity. Once ready, he rested and ate his fill again, so that his strength might not fail him once his foot was on open ground. Then, one night when the moon was beyond the world rim and clouds had soiled the faces of the Pleiades, he was gone.

At the Federal prison at Leavenworth, in 1901, the invention of a convict made possible the historic mutiny and jail-break in which twenty-seven determined men got away, after killing and wounding their keepers.

The new prison, as it was then called, was being built by convict labour, on a hill site west of the town. The convicts were kept in the old prison, later called the military prison,



Warders by means of ladders studying the spot from which a number of criminals had escaped. Incidentally the photograph shows the great height of the wall which they had scaled with prison-made rope ladders.

in the fort, two or three miles away. Every morning a file of four or five hundred convicts was marched out of the old prison and along the roads and stream beds to the new site. Here they worked inside a wooden stockade, laying bricks, erecting walls, building the very cells that were to contain them in the future.

One sunny afternoon three or four of the leaders among the convicts walked over to a point of the stockade, stuck their shovels into the earth, turned over a little sod, and procured several heavy revolvers and extra ammunition, which had certainly been planted there by accessories from the outside. So armed, they advanced on the main gate, which had a tower above it, occupied by a guard with a repeating rifle. Inside guards rushed to head the mutineers off and were shot down or driven to cover. In an exchange of shots between the convicts and the tower guard one convict and the guard were killed. The gates were thrown open and the convicts ran out, followed by others to the total of twenty-seven.

The puzzle of the thing was solved when one of the ringleaders fell into the hands of the prison authorities and confessed. This man had been in communication with an outside agent by means of secret writing. The prison people were more puzzled than ever. What means of secret writing had men within the prison walls? How could they get the necessary tools and chemicals? What code had they that had passed the eye of the prison censor?

The captive leader drew a piece of calendered paper toward him and asked for ink and a pen with two clean points. With ink on the first point he scrawled out a conventional and innocent letter of the very kind a convict would write home. The officials did not even note that the lines were spread rather far apart.

After this writing had been permitted to dry thoroughly, the demonstrator put the clean pen point into the holder and moistened it with his tongue. Thus, with spittle, he wrote between the lines of the original letter this menacing sentence:—

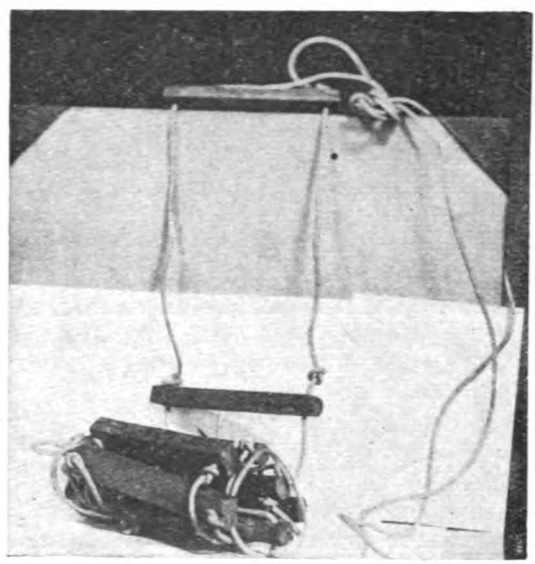
"Leave four revolvers and extra shots buried inside and under thirty-fifth paling of stockade west of main gate by October 5."

There were no magician pen-top readers present and none knew what had been set down.

The captive allowed the sheet to dry completely. Then he passed it among the officials, asking if any could see any marks or make out any letter. All were baffled. Laughing shortly, the convict dipped a small sponge into the ink-well and rapidly spread the blue ink over the entire sheet. An astounding sight greeted the gaze of the officials, for wherever the man had written in spittle with his pen, the words and letters stood out clearly in black and could be read as easily as any other writing.

This method is not on the official roster of secret communication methods and it was unknown to the letter inspectors in the late war until a friend of this writer bore the secret to headquarters.

Mention of this affair brings to remembrance the fact that convicts have been master inventors of secret methods of communication and of smuggling, some of their practices and codes being of the most ingenious, complicated, and surprising kind. But this matter has been treated at length by others, and I have not space to go into details here. The art of hidden communication reached its height, to be sure, in the days when talking was forbidden among prisoners.



A rope ladder, invented by a criminal, so made that it can be wrapped round the body and carried without detection.

Another type of invention to which the criminal has devoted unremitting attention for centuries is the secret door or magical cabinet. The reader must remember that no castle of old-fashioned romance was without the former and that the latter has been widely employed by conjurers and spiritists. Since such products can hardly have had any licit use to begin with, their attribution to criminal origins is almost automatic. A single anecdote will serve to illustrate the uses to which magical cabinets were put.

In the autumn of 1879 a most distinguished-looking gentleman, somewhat far advanced down the slide of life, to judge by his snowy hair and silvery beard, arrived at the Hotel Geneve in Naples. With him came a battery of large trunks and, what was more to the æsthetic eye, a most prepossessing damsel—tall and stately and ripe to opulence. The gentleman announced that he was English and permitted himself to be called milord, though some thought there was a Teuton burr in his consonants. The lady was his niece and occupied a room adjoining that of milord, which fact is important to the unfolding drama.

The newly-arrived couple had no sooner got their trunks opened than two large cabinets appeared in the shape of moderately high desks with drawers below and a tablet above that was pulled down for writing, disclosing other smaller compartments and drawers. Whoever has meandered through the antique shops must be familiar with these contraptions As soon as these affairs were unpacked, milord pushed one of them through into his niece's room, pulled out a small drawer that was fitted with lock and key, passed his arm back until it must have struck the back, and then carefully moved the cabinet over, with its back against the door connecting the two rooms, which had meantime been closed. Going to his own room by way of the hall, he placed his cabinet in a similar position against the door, pulled out a drawer corresponding to that he had drawn in the opposite room, and made some marking on the door with a pencil. This done, he drew his cabinet away again, cut a piece out of the thin panel of the door with an auger and a jigsaw, and put his cabinet back into place.

A few days later, after the new-comers had satisfied the host of their superior breeding, a thing not difficult to do if one have the ready bank-notes, the milord Inglese stepped in to visit Amalfi, the principal jeweller of the place. He went over the

The outer terminus of a tunnel through which several prisoners reached freedom.

jeweller's stock with fat superciliousness, and wound up by buying a scarf-pin for a thousand francs. He paid in cash and asked that the trifle be sent to him at the Hotel Geneve.

A week later he appeared again with a most beautiful jewelled and enamelled watch. Could Signor Amalfi supply the missing stones and repair the injured enamel? Indeed he could, as well as any man on this rich round ball. So the watch was left and soon thereafter called for.

On the occasion of this third visit, milord looked over a good many precious trifles, bought a bauble or two, and remarked casually that his niece had become engaged and that he must go to Paris and buy a string of diamonds, which was to be her gift from him. Could Signor Amalfi recommend the best jeweller. And Amalfi, quite up to human expectations, duly and fluently recommended himself. So saying he brought forth from his safe a collar and necklace which had just been bought from the unfortunate Princess di Pasto for a ridiculously small sum. The thing was readily worth six hundred thousand francs. But, in the circumstances, four hundred and fifty thousand would buy this marvellous creation. Milord examined it critically and went away, saying that he would consider. He really had fancied something more expensive for his beautiful niece.

Poor Amalfi sat in the brine for several days before milord deigned to put in an appearance again. This time he had made up his mind to take the thing. After all, it was money enough to spend on a woman's throat. But he would have to arrange to bring the money from his bank in Rome. That would take four days. So then! Let Amalfi bring the trinket to the Geneve at eleven o'clock on Saturday and all would be well. But the whole business must be a secret from the niece. She must in no circumstances see the necklace or suspect the jeweller's mission.

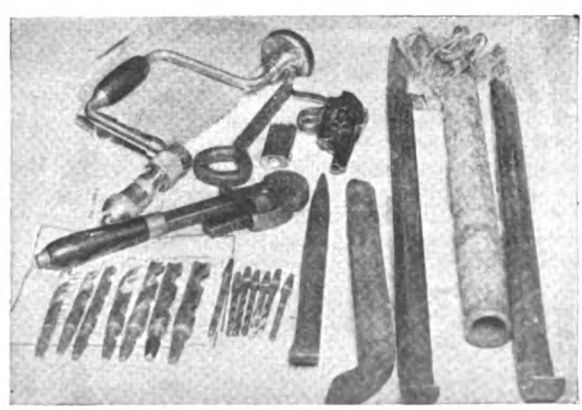
On Saturday Amalfi appeared and was ushered up to the room of the milord with vast ceremony. He found his distinguished client waiting for him. They sat down at once and the diamonds were passed over to milord for a last inspection. He had them in his hands, passing a critical eye upon them, when there came a light tapping on the door and a musical young woman's voice calling "Uncle! Uncle!"

Milord spun about in a twinkling, tossed the diamonds and their case into a drawer of the cabinet, took a key from his pocket, ostentatiously displayed it to Amalfi, and, locking the drawer, joined the jeweller by the window.

He was none too swift, for the resplendent niece opened the door without further ceremony and came into the room announcing that milord's tailor had been waiting some time in the other room and was fuming.

With a wink at the jeweller, who bent a favouring eye upon this young charmer, milord remarked that his niece would entertain Signor Amalfi while he went to appease the tailor.

The jeweller and the beauty sat and



A typical set of tools of the up-to-date burglar.

chatted. They chatted of this and that. They waited. They grew a little restless. The lady relieved the situation with slight coquetries which rallied the flagging patience of the jeweller. At last the girl grew impatient and went to summon her uncle.

Signor Amalfi waited alone now. He waited an hour. Then he summoned the hotel proprietor, who assured him that he had seen milord go out with a gentleman, and milady soon afterwards, evidently in quest of her uncle. Amalfi mentioned the necklace and indicated that he had seen it locked into the drawer of the cabinet.

The landlord threw up his hands in horror. What an absurd fear of Amalfi's! Why, these people were finer than spun gold. It was the way of great folks like these to be forgetful. No doubt milord had gone off on some tangent and his niece was seeking him. Let Amalfi contain himself. Besides, weren't the diamonds locked in the drawer?

Content once more, the jeweller relaxed on a couch and waited; the hours passed; then the day. At nightfall he would be put off no longer. Let the Englishman like it or not, he would not go home without his diamonds, and he must go home. He'd break into the cabinet, and if milord wished to sue, let him try it.

The drawer was broken open. There lay the jewel case, leering open with its satin throat. But the diamonds?

The door opened without further ceremony and the resplendent niece came into the room.

Milord had merely stepped around into his niece's room, pulled out the trick drawer there, reached in, taken the diamonds, and gone upon his way. And the beautiful niece, having allowed her dear uncle to catch the boat, hurried after him and took a train going in the opposite direction. All her effects and his, excepting some empty trunks, had been previously removed, and there was nothing by which to trace these cabinet thieves.

NOT DONE

by

STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

HIS name was Priest, Albert Hector Priest. When he came to Tibbelsford, the inhabitants regarded him as a foreigner. It took some time to convince them that, as a matter of fact, he had been born and bred in the town. His father had been a corn-chandler in Market Square, and he himself was educated at Tibbelsford Grammar School. At the age of seventeen, both his parents having died, an uncle paid his passage out to Canada and gave him twenty pounds to start him on a career. He was a smart boy, quick at figures, and with a natural grasp for mechanics, and he got on. He became in turn trolley-car conductor, clerk, bar-tender, showman, professional cyclist, dealer in real estate, soft goods salesman, manufacturers' agent, sub-editor of *The Wool Trade Journal*, and his activities carried him all over Canada, California, and the Middle West. Then in the end he invented the celebrated "Priest trouser-stretcher" and made a small fortune.

"The Priest trouser-stretcher" was a most ingenious white-metal contraption, and it was advertised in numerous newspapers under a headline which said :—

"Do not part with your pants. If they trouble you go to PRIEST and confess";

and below came a sub-headline :—

"As pants the hart for cooling streams, so does PRIEST pant for yours."

So you see that in addition to his other abilities Albert Hector had a distinct literary flair.

Anyway, at the age of forty-one, so successful had the trouser-stretchers become that Priest sold out his interests, took his wife and two sons for a trip round the world, and came to Tibbelsford with the idea of settling down in the place of his birth. He took a modern Georgian house in the west end of the town, and fitted it up with central heating, electric light, an enormous number of bathrooms, lifts, and endless labour-saving devices. It was fashioned rather on the lines of "The Ideal Home." The vicar, who had only one bathroom in the rectory—and in that you could never get any hot water—regarded the place with suspicion.

It was not until the trouser-stretcher magnate had contributed a useful cheque to church funds that he was forgiven for his lack of conformity.

So obsessed was Albert Hector with the designing and arranging of his ideal home that it was some months before he had time to pay much attention to the town itself. Most of the associates of his youth had vanished, but apart from that, when he had time to look round, he could not but be impressed by the fact that the town had not changed at all. It struck him as amazing that in twenty-four years anything could remain so stationary. There was old Mr. Selden Wright with his huge public-house, "The Love-a-Duck," still dominating the town. All public meetings were still held in his old-fashioned ball-room. The school that he had attended remained untouched. The High Street was exactly the same. There were a few new shops, and a few fronts had been refaced. A little way out two or three dozen new red-brick villas had been put up, and one or two motor garages. But that was all. It was not only that there had been little structural change, but mentally the place remained the same. "Good God! they're stagnant," he thought. People were going about doing identically the same things, thinking the same things, that they did a quarter of a

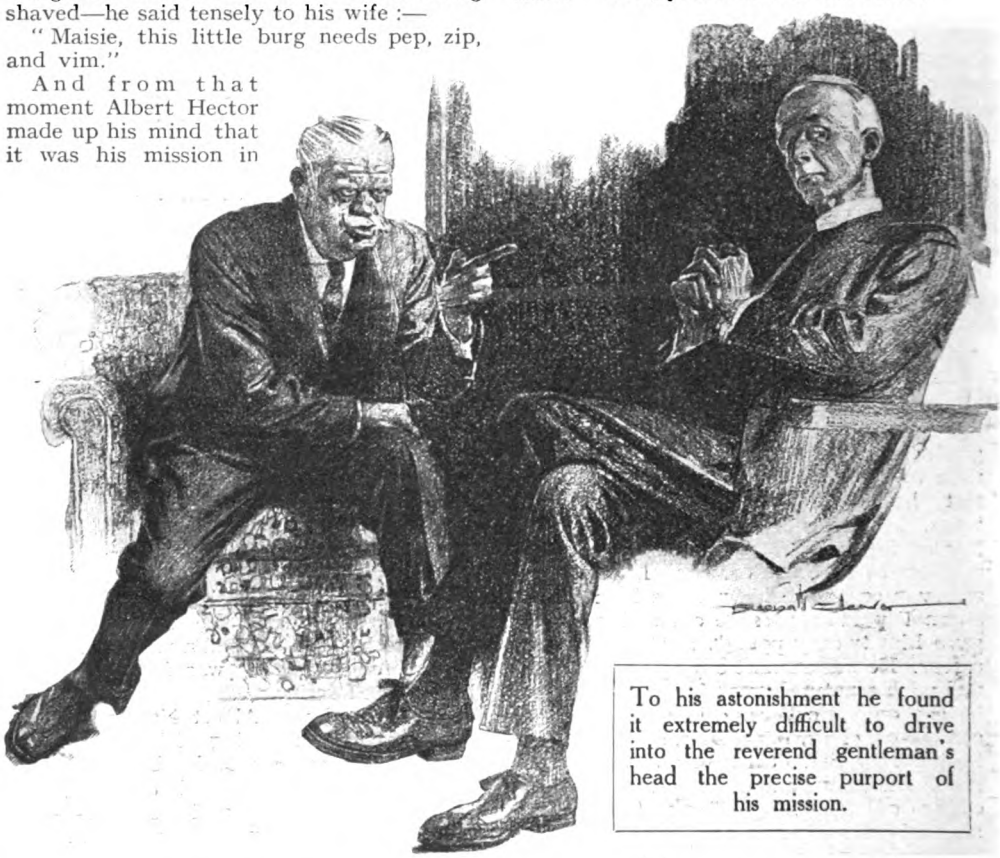
Copyright, 1924, by Stacy Aumonier.

century ago. They hadn't moved with the times. They knew nothing about modern life. Returning home one evening after a visit to George Splutter, the barber—where he found to his astonishment that he could not get his boots shined whilst he was being shaved—he said tensely to his wife :—

"Maisie, this little burg needs pep, zip, and vim."

And from that moment Albert Hector made up his mind that it was his mission in life to put "pep, zip, and vim" into Tibbelsford. But how to go to work? He discussed the matter at great length with his eldest son, James, who was studying to be an architect and surveyor. The other boy had gone back to Canada. "This place fair beats me," said Priest senior. "There's no git-up-and-git about it. Think of it: a town of this size and there's no social vitality at all. There are just its pubs, and churches, and shops, and market, and old-fashioned houses without any modern conveniences. The folks just go backwards and forwards to their work without any ambition or vision. They've got no kick. They don't know anything. They do the same old things they did when I was a boy—the church bazaar, the flower-show, mothers' meetings, Salvation Army, Girls' Friendly, the stock-breeders' union, and so on. Why, Gosh! there are only two picture-houses in the whole town, and no theatre or decent lecture-hall. I tell you it wants vision. It wants soul."

And James, who was a dutiful son, and dependent upon his father for pocket-money, said: "Dad, you've said a mouthful."



To his astonishment he found it extremely difficult to drive into the reverend gentleman's head the precise purport of his mission.

"As far as I can find out," continued Mr. Priest, "there are not even any Masons no lodges, no Elks, no Buffaloes, no Flamingoes, nothing."

"Dad, you've hit it as usual," said the young man. "There's the idea. Why don't you found a lodge and get a move on the social spirit of the community?"

Mrs. Priest here joined in the discussion. She was a Canadian woman, of Scotch Presbyterian ancestry. She was flat and thin and she wore horn-rimmed spectacles. She pointed her index finger at her husband and said :—

"That's it, Bert. Uplift!"

MR. PRIEST was secretly pleased that his wife and son should both be intelligent enough to see that he was destined to be the man to see this thing through, but he was not going to appear anxious. He

hummed and hawed, and talked of the great difficulties. And after thinking over his project for three days he went and called on the vicar, the Reverend Andrew Spiers. To him he endeavoured to explain the idea. To his astonishment he found it extremely difficult to drive into the reverend gentleman's head the precise purport of his mission. The parson's ascetic features gave the impression of incredulity, faint amusement, doubt, bewilderment, and even disapproval. When his visitor had finished, he said :—

"Um—er—yes, Mr. Priest, quayte so, quayte so. But it appears to me that what you are aiming at is allowed for—and indeed already arranged for—in our church organizations."

"Ah, you don't quite get me, sir," replied Albert Hector. "This is not a religious organization."

"Why not ?" said Mr. Spiers.

"Well, because it's—it's—er—something else. Everybody doesn't go to church. I want to get hold of the business man, the good fellow. Get 'em together. Get 'em to pull together."

"To what end, Mr. Priest ?"

"For the good of the community."

"The church has that noble ambition."

"Yes, but—business men, you know what I mean. A lot of good fellows get together and they help each other. You know, they cut all the bunk out and come down to brass tacks. Push, go, ambition. That's what this little town wants."

"But why do you come to me, Mr. Priest ? Your project appears to me to be more of a business than a religious conception."

"What's wrong with business and religion going hand in hand, sir ? Ain't I a good churchman ? And my son and wife ? Haven't I supported your church ?"

"You have been very kind, Mr. Priest, but I—I still don't quayte see the precise significance of this idea of yours. I don't think the parish of Tibbelsford is quayte the place."

He could get nothing more satisfactory out of the Rev. Andrew Spiers, but they parted on friendly enough terms. One of the secrets of his success in life lay in the fact that Albert Hector was a born optimist. He refused to be discouraged by this interview with the rector, or by the bewildered and sceptical attitude of other citizens to whom he tried to explain his idea.

"You've got to allow that they're slow and dull-witted," he told his son. "But when they get the hang of the idea, and see what a boost it's going to give the town, they'll fall in quick enough."

"Of course they will, dad," agreed James. "What we'll be wanting will be a meeting-house. Now, what do you say to me getting out plans for a swell lecture-hall ? We could put it up in that vacant lot just before you come to the cemetery."

It was not in the nature of Albert Hector to agree with any suggestion of his son or wife directly. He liked to talk about it to such length that in the end he persuaded himself that the idea emanated from himself. The idea of a lecture-hall or public meeting-house had indeed occurred to him, but not the idea that his son should try his prentice hand on it. However, the boy was getting on. It would be experience for him, and he would be able to get professional advice gratis from the firm to whom he was apprenticed. He eventually agreed.

But it was quite obvious that a move must be got on to the formation of the Lodge before James's new building could come into existence. A few weeks later every householder in the town received this circular :—

TO THE BURGESSES OF TIBBELSFORD.
HAIL AND WELL MET!

What is England in need of ? Why is England lagging behind the modern pushing countries of the world ? Where is the pep that made us the dominant power in the Victorian era ? Have we discovered an elixir of old age ? Some panacea that keeps us just alive and NO MORE ? What we want is to get good fellows together and get a boost on the social life of the community. We are stagnant. What we want is Movement, impelled by ethical and Christian principles, the square deal, mutual advancement in education and commerce. We've got to give the leg-up, not the stand-by. We've got to drink the strong waters of AMBITION. We've got to have vision, go, belief in ourselves, hustle, COURAGE, co-operation, unity, and foresight.

To this end will be formed immediately the noble order of the BISONS. Temporary offices have been secured at 95, High Street. They will be opened on Friday and Saturday next between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Roll up in your hundreds and enrol !

There is no fee, no charge of any kind.

The novitiate will be enrolled in the ancient order of WOMBATS. And by stages of proficiency and experience he will eventuate into the order of EMUS, and finally to the most noble order of BISONS.

(Signed by) the Grand Master of Bisons,
ALBERT HECTOR PRIEST.

When, with a loud shout of laughter, the landlord showed this circular to old Sam Spearhead, in the bar of the Love-a-Duck, that same evening, the old man, who was rather short-sighted, said :—

"What is it ? A circus ?"

"No, sir," shouted the landlord. "Unless I'm much mistaken it's going to be an exhibition of performing animals."

Needless to say the circular caused endless comment. Mrs. Priest, happening to meet the rector's wife the next day, said :—

"Well, what do you think of our project, Mrs. Spiers ?"

"It isn't done," replied that lady, and moved away. And that was that.

"What's the fellow's idea ?" was the dominant topic.

Now the ironic part of the business was that, as a matter of fact, Mr. Albert Hector Priest was quite sincere in his aims, and no one would give him the credit for it. Opinion was divided into three schools: one that argued that he was a religious fanatic, another that he was just an ordinary fanatic, and the third that he was some kind of swindler. The mere fact that there was no fee or charge of any kind was suspicious. People in Tibbelsford were not accustomed to do or get things for nothing.

Some of these opinions reached Mr. Priest, but he went calmly on with his preparations. The offices in the High Street were fitted out with chairs, tables, roll-top desks, files, account books, works of reference, carpets, and curtains. James obtained two days' leave from his duties in order to assist in a clerical capacity, and two lady stenographers were engaged for the two days.

WHEN the Friday dawned, Mr. Priest and his son were up betimes, and arrived at the office at eight-forty-five. The two lady stenographers were there before nine and all was bustle and excitement. The father and son both donned green cloaks trimmed with brown fur, curious cockade hats, and round their necks were many chains and orders.

"Now, then," said Mr. Priest, "system ! that's what we want. System and organization. These offices alone will be an inspiration to these guys. Now, mind none of you forget what I've told you. When the candidate enters, Miss Colegate, you ask him his name and address, and write it down on the card. He then passes on to you, Miss Withers. You take the card, ask him the questions which you've got on the list, and enter the replies in the Order records. He then passes into the inner office to James, who will instruct him in the first principles. I shall be there too, in order that any difficult point may be explained. Hurry up ! Hurry up ! I hear some coming up the stairs already."

This was an auspicious start, for it was barely the stroke of nine. The two men retired to the inner room and took up their positions. There was a timid tap on the door and Miss Colegate called out "Come in."

The door opened and seven very small and very grubby children trailed in and stared about.

"Well, what do you children want ?" said Miss Colegate.

"Please, miss," said one of the bigger girls, "we've come to see the animals."

"Animals ? What animals ?"

"Father said you was going to show us some animals."

When the two lady typists at last managed to convince the children that there were no animals they set up a howl in chorus. Priest and son came hurrying into the room, and in the end Mr. Priest had to give all the children a penny each to keep them quiet and get them to go away.

After that the staff was undisturbed for over an hour. The offices were above a chemist's shop, and they could constantly hear the drunken clang of the shop bell.

Mr. Priest looked out of the window. There were the market carts, the van from the Imperial Stores, errand-boys on bicycles, coal carts, an itinerant knife-grinder, men with push-barrows selling fruit and vegetables.

"All just as it was when I was a boy," he reflected. "They're an immovable mass." Then he thought, brightly : "Well, it's for me to be an irresistible force."

His reflections were disturbed by the sound of heavy footsteps coming upstairs and a tap on the outer office door. Mr. Priest peeped out and saw a likely, well-set-up young mechanic enter. He was carrying a bag of tools. He heard Miss Colegate say, brightly : "Well, sir ? Have you come to—er——" and he heard the man reply :—

"Can you tell me where the trap-door is, miss ? I've come to mend the leak in the roof."

And for the whole of the two days the activities of the staff were accompanied by banging and sawing on the roof above. A little later a forlorn-looking middle-aged man turned up. He wanted to sell a typewriter. It would be idle to record the full list of visitors that the Bison Lodge entertained during the two days. It is only necessary to state that among others they consisted of seven unemployed, who came to see if there was a chance of a job, three tradespeople canvassing for orders, an inspector of police, a man who wanted his account paid for a carpet, and about twenty morbid people who came in to find out what it was all about.

Nevertheless, when the premises closed on Saturday night, Mr. Priest had the

satisfaction of knowing that he had enrolled eleven Wombats. It cannot be said that they were ideal representatives of the ancient borough. They were for the most part the rag-tag and bobtail of the town, drawn thither by the attraction of the term "good fellows." These good fellows reasoned it out in this way :—

The term good fellow implied jollification. Jollification suggested beer. Of course there might be beer and there might not be beer, but beer was worth taking a sporting chance over. Anyway, there was nothing to pay.

Except that they were a shabby lot, Mr. Priest had little chance of judging the characters of his Wombats. He could not know, for instance, that two of them had done time, that one was a village idiot, and that four of them were such notorious loafers and beer-swillers and wife-beaters that Mr. Selden Wright refused to allow them in his bar.

"It is a beginning," he said. "When these fellows get the hang of it they'll attract others."

He arranged for the first meeting of the Wombats two weeks ahead in his own house. He might have arranged it sooner, only that the intervening period had to be devoted to the designing and manufacturing of robes, insignia, and regalia. Meanwhile the plans and elevations of the lecture-hall had been passed, James had incidentally arranged for a very satisfactory secret commission for himself with a local builder, and the work proceeded with the ponderous deliberation that was characteristic of the place.

OF the eleven enrolled Wombats only seven turned up on the night, but by active personal canvassing the Priests had secured nine others, so that sixteen attended the inaugural meeting. These included their own gardener and Mr. Cornice, the builder who was erecting the hall. He was full of enthusiasm for the noble order of Bisons. He said :—

"Mr. Priest, this is a magnificent idea. There's no doubt that this is just what the town wants. You are a public benefactor."

The Wombats found themselves committed to wear a curious black cloak, trimmed with grey fur. The Priests were in green and brown. The meeting was held in the drawing-room, and Mr. Priest, as grand master, addressed the company for over an hour. He spoke ecstatically about citizenship, good-fellowship, business, God, patriotism, Masonry, the Colonies, agriculture, vision, the building trade, trouser-stretchers, love, and ambition. The newly-enrolled Wombats listened to him in patches. Their eyes were inclined to wander furtively around the room. When this was all over, would there be beer, or would there not be beer? The unexpressed anxiety in every heart centred round that immortal query: "To be or not to be?"

However, the speech ended at last, and Mr. Priest said, briskly :—

"Now, brothers, we will join my wife in the dining-room and have some refreshments."

The Wombats tried not to show an indecent haste. They were not yet out of the wood. What sort of refreshments?

On arriving in the dining-room they discovered that their worst fears were well-founded. Mrs. Priest was dispensing tea, coffee, thin sandwiches, cakes, and biscuits.

At a meeting held a week later the only Wombats who put in an appearance were Mr. Cornice, the builder, a gentleman named Wiles, who had done two years for burglary, a religious fanatic named Muffle, and the village idiot.

The only member of the family who accepted this falling off with equanimity was Mrs. Priest, who the morning after the previous meeting missed some spoons, a silver jardinière, four brass pots, an ormolu clock, a miniature set with diamond paste, a mackintosh cape, and two umbrellas.

"I'm afraid we haven't yet struck the right bunch," her husband remarked, defensively. He refused to believe evil of his fellow-man. There was some curious perverse streak in this community. He couldn't understand it. He took old Frank Goolen, the gardener, to task the morning after this disaster.

"Well, Frank, what did you think of our meeting?"

The old man pulled himself up and leant on his hoe. His clear blue ingenuous eyes regarded his master with a certain diffidence. He was obviously anxious not to be rude.

"Oo, I doan't know," he said. "I doan't take much stock by un."

"How do you usually spend your evenings, Frank?"

"Oo, well, I goes 'ome. I 'as a bite and a pow-wow with the missus. P'r'aps I goes up to Love-a-Duck. I 'as a glass of ale, maybe. I likes a glass of ale. I 'as a pow-wow with old Sam, p'r'aps. We 'as one or two like. That's 'ow it goes."

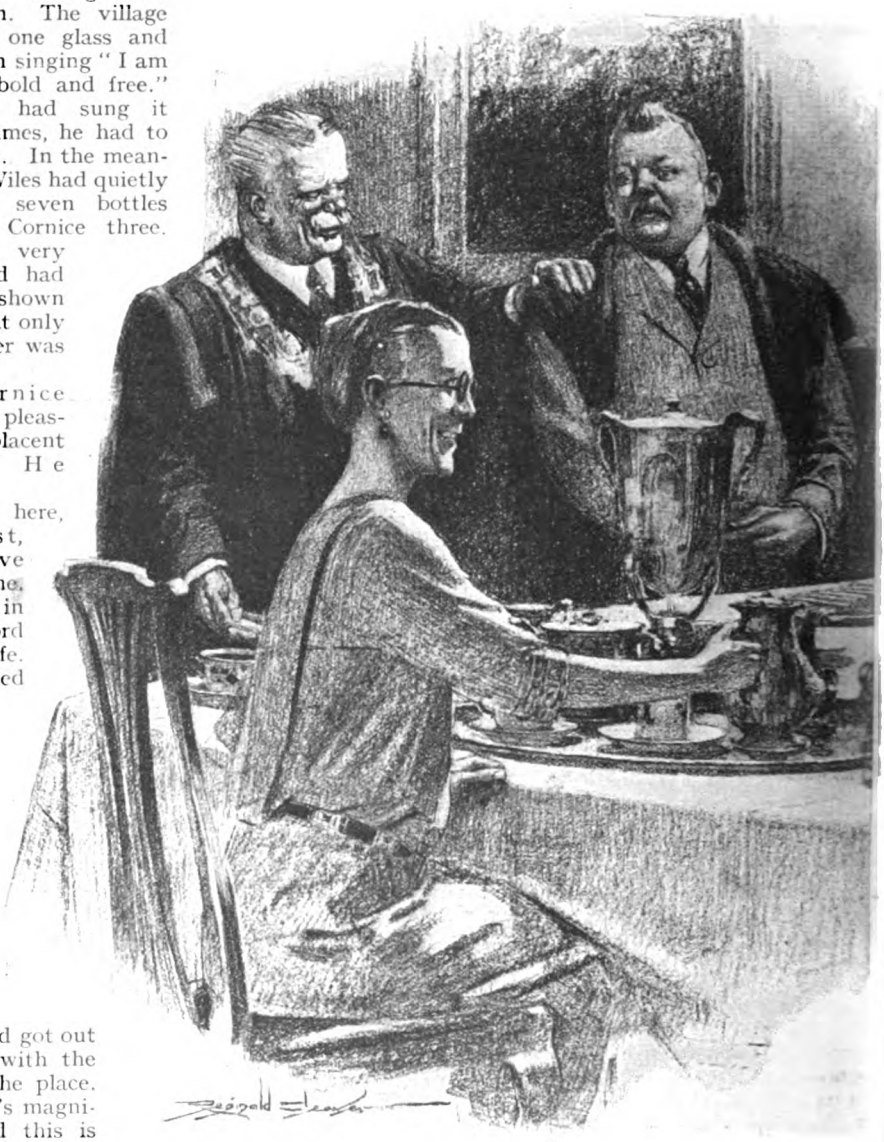
Mr. Priest saw light. Ale! That's what it was. It was ale that these men wanted and expected. How foolish of him not to have sensed this before! It had never occurred to him. For the second meeting he ordered in two dozen bottles of beer. If the original company had attended, the meeting no doubt would have been a great success. But there were only four, and at sight of these rows of bottles the religious

fanatic, Muffle, burst into a wild tirade. He said alcohol was the invention of the devil. He had been deceived. This was a house of sin, and so on. He left in a state of righteous indignation. The village idiot had one glass and insisted on singing "I am a pirate, bold and free." After he had sung it thirteen times, he had to be led out. In the meantime Mr. Wiles had quietly consumed seven bottles and Mr. Cornice three. Wiles got very drunk and had also to be shown out, so that only the builder was left.

Mr. Cornice was in a pleasant, complacent mood. He said:—

"Look here, Mr. Priest, you leave this to me. I've lived in Tibbelsford all my life. You've lived abroad and got out of touch with the spirit of the place. Your idea's magnificent, and this is very good beer. The trouble is you haven't got hold of the right kind of citizen. Now I know them all, all the best ones. I suggest that at the next meeting you get in a barrel of beer, and perhaps a bottle of whisky for some of the elder men. I'll go round and get hold of the real good fellows, as you call them, and then you explain your project all over again."

"That's a good idea, dad," said James, helping himself to his third bottle of beer, "Mr. Cornice knows everyone."



Mrs. Priest was becoming a little peeved by the whole thing. She ejaculated:—

"It seems to me that the people around here are more interested in downpour than in uplift."

The third meeting of the noble order of Bisons was an enormous success. Forty-two jolly gentlemen of the agricultural

and shopkeeping class attended. Mr. Priest had the success of his life. Every word he uttered was cheered to the echo. After the speech they adjourned to the dining-room, and the barrel of beer was tapped and the bottle of whisky opened, and tongues began to wag. There was no doubt that Mr. Priest was a very good fellow, the kind of man Tibbelsford had been waiting for for years. The town was slow and old-fashioned. It wanted bucking up. Here was the very man. Yes, thank you, I'll take another glass. The bottle of whisky seemed to vanish as soon as the cork was taken out, and Mr. Cornice drew the attention of James to the fact, and James told his father. Mr. Priest, flushed with his triumph, ordered three more bottles up from the cellar. By half-past eleven the barrel of beer ran dry, and six bottles of whisky had been consumed. The noble order of B'sons was in full working order. But the next day there was an unpleasant reaction. It was brought about by Mrs. Priest. She was very angry. It was not that things had been stolen. Nothing was missing except two more umbrellas, a walking-stick, and a pair of field-glasses, but the house was in a disgusting condition. It had been a wet night and forty-two pairs of muddy boots had tramped all over the two best carpets. Moreover, cigar and cigarette ends and tobacco ash were scattered all over the floors. Beer and whisky had been spilt, and the house reeked like a beer tavern. One of the servants had given notice, and the cook was in bed with a mysterious bilious attack.

On arriving in the dining-room they discovered that their worst fears were well-founded. Mrs. Priest was dispensing tea, coffee, thin sandwiches, cakes, and biscuits.

"I won't have another meeting in my house," she said, emphatically. "It's perfectly disgusting. If the English people can't do anything without getting drunk, I should think we had better go back to Canada. Besides, think of the expense."

Mr. Priest was also angry, angry with the Wombats, with himself, and with his wife. He tried to explain that the meeting was only of a tentative, experimental nature. They were feeling round to get the right people. As for the drink, he certainly shouldn't supply whisky like that again. One of the ideas of the Lodge was to counter that kind of thing, to encourage Christianity and good citizenship. There was no harm in a little beer. When the hall was finished, and the wheat sifted from the chaff, he meant to make the members pay a subscription, and they might run a small beer canteen where they could buy their own drinks. There was no need for his wife to get hysterical.

"Anyway," she snapped, finally, "you can just understand. I won't have another meeting here."

This was an exceedingly disconcerting decision, as within the next few days there were one hundred and thirty-seven applications for membership!

RUMOUR is a peccant jade. Heaven only knows what she whispered about. It is certain that Mrs. Spiers cut Mrs. Priest dead in the High Street, and in the local paper the following Saturday, under the heading "THINGS WE SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW," appeared this paragraph:—

"Whether the police are watching the activities of a certain Colonial gentleman who has lately taken a house in the west end, and where orgies are reputed to take place in the name of some quack religion?"

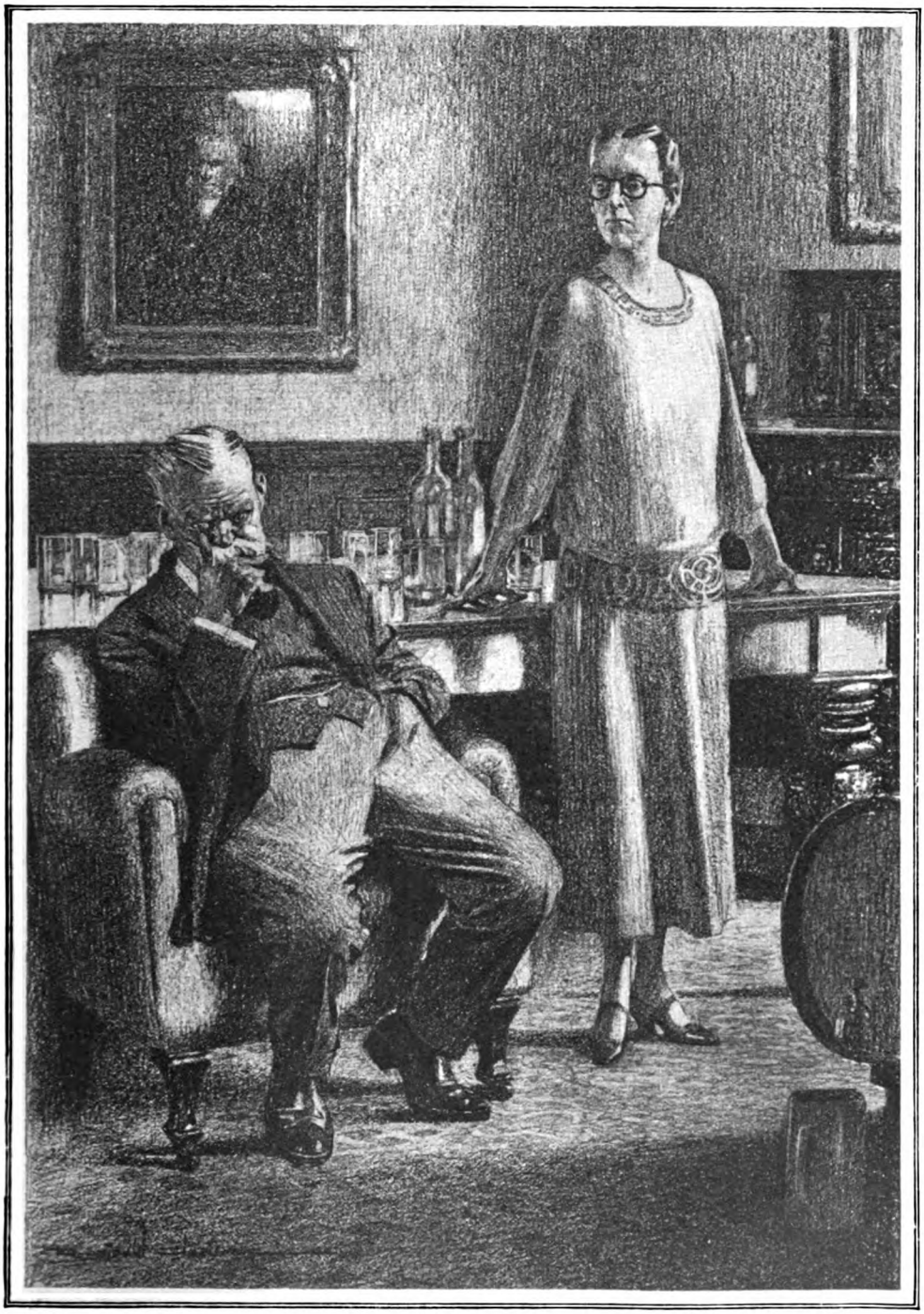
By which it will be seen that fate and the *Tibbelsford Times* were very unkind to Mr. Priest, who had merely set out with the laudable ambition of introducing "pep, zip, and vim" into the town. He was, however, not yet beaten. If his wife would not have the next meeting at home, it must be held elsewhere. He set about searching for a suitable room. The parish school, he was informed, was "not available for such purpose." The lecture-room in connection with St. Mary's Church was quite out of the question, as they were no longer on speaking terms with the Spierses. There was a fairly large room connected with the Baptist chapel, but it was so unlikely that the pastor would agree to let it that he did not even approach him. There were no other rooms of any size except in a few large private houses, and none of their owners seemed anxious to accommodate him. What was he to do? He had already enrolled his Wombats. The movement was just beginning to catch on. If he waited till the lecture-hall was finished, interest would have waned. It would be a confession of failure. There remained only one solution—the ballroom at the Love-a-Duck. He had not wanted to go there, as the place was essentially a pub. He was, moreover, a little dubious about Mr. Selden Wright, the proprietor, whom he had never met, and who seemed to exercise an undue influence on the town. He was evidently a man of strong personality, although only a publican and probably a drunkard. However, there being no alternative, he was forced to apply to him.

In due course the landlord replied. Yes, the room would be available on such and such a date, and the terms would be—well, they seemed rather excessive to Mr. Priest, but it was Hobson's choice.

And so the next meeting of the Bison Lodge took place at the Love-a-Duck. It was crowded out. Mr. Priest had never addressed such a meeting. There seemed to be a feeling of tense interest. The speaker was so absorbed in his subject that he had no time to give a thought as to whether the interest centred round what he was saying, or whether it was more closely associated with what arrangements he had made with the licensee. Were drinks to be free, or had they to buy them themselves? Mr. Priest was oblivious. He waxed eloquently about good-fellowship, vision—well, you know what he waxed about. About half-way through the landlord came in and stood by the door. He listened for about ten minutes, and then slipped quietly out. A few minutes later there came a reverberating noise from the Bar. It was the landlord's laugh. It was an irresistible, contagious rocket of sound, that seemed to shake the rafters and to cause the chandeliers to tremble. It made the audience tremble. It was like a sardonic message conveying the fact that there was to be no free beer, and that closing time was drawing near. They looked at each other apprehensively, and those nearest the door began to slip out. The risk was too great. When the address was over, a third of the audience had disappeared.

So consumed was he with his oratory that Mr. Priest hardly noticed this. Directly it was over, Mr. Cornice and some of his immediate pals came up and smothered him with congratulations.

"You've fairly got them now, sir," said Mr. Cornice. "You'll revolutionize the town."



Mrs. Priest was very angry. "I won't have another meeting in my house," she said, emphatically.

"By Jove, sir, it was magnificent!" echoed Mr. Cornice's cabinetmakers' foreman, who was wearing his Sunday clothes for the occasion. Others buzzed around him, and Mr. Priest went home feeling that he could tell his wife with triumph that it was much more satisfactory having the meetings at the Love-a-Duck than at home.

The triumph, however, was not of long duration. For at the next meeting, although the great hostel itself seemed very crowded, very few troubled to come into the meeting. James, who was acting as secretary, had to read out a long list of resignations among the Wombats. During the meeting, moreover, there was a good deal of hilarity, not only outside in the bars and corridors, but in the room itself. Some of the cheers had a note of irony.

When it was over, Mr. Cornice said :—

"We haven't quite got the right crowd yet. We must wait till the lecture-hall is finished—get our own atmosphere like."

It was another two months before the lecture-hall was ready. In the meantime Mr. Priest held a few private meetings and did a deal of active canvassing on his own.

"I realize," he explained philosophically to his wife and son, "that I have acquired something which they find difficult to get. They, on the other hand, have a substratum of conservatism I have forgotten. I didn't believe it still existed. You can change an individual, but it's damn difficult to change a community. It isn't only beer which is the pivot of their lives. There's a certain kind of queer stickiness and faith in what's always been done being good enough for 'em. It'll take a lot of shifting."

THE lecture-hall was a most refined structure in red brick and stucco. It was panelled inside in beetroot-coloured mahogany with a blue frieze. It had a committee-room, a reading-room, a secretary's room, lavatories, and a bar. Now, concerning this bar there was a good deal of trouble. Mr. Priest had decided that if the Wombats demanded beer they should pay for it themselves. There should be a lodge canteen. It was not till it was nearly completed that Mr. Cornice remarked one day: "I suppose, sir, you have applied for a licence?"

Mr. Priest hadn't. It didn't occur to him that there would be any difficulty over that. He got his lawyer to work, and that gentleman reported that application had to be made to the Town Clerk, who would report the matter to the local licensing magistrates, who, in the course of time, would refer to the licensing committee, who at some remote date would decide that it was not desirable at that time to grant any further licences for the sale of intoxicating liquor.

"Of course," Mr. Cornice pointed out, "there's nothing against you as a proprietor supplying any drink you like, so long as it's not charged for."

The whole attitude of the town seemed to be a conspiracy to force him to supply beer to the inhabitants free. Beer seemed to be the Open Sesame to every local activity. He couldn't understand it. He was angry—damned if he would buy beer for these bone-headed guys! He offered uplift and they demanded beer, and the church and the schools and the civil authorities wouldn't help him.

"Never mind," he said, "we'll start out with a swell do. We'll make 'em sit up. There'll be only soft drinks, but we'll give 'em such an entertainment as they've never had in this little burg before. None of your cheap stuff, but a real elevating evening."

The following week the whole town was placarded with flaming posters :—

THE BISON LODGE.

GRAND OPENING OF NEW LECTURE HALL,
Corner of Boltington Road.

SATURDAY Evening next, the 27th,
at 8.30 p.m.

On this occasion there will be, in addition to an address by the

GRAND MASTER,

A LANTERN LECTURE on the Austrian Alps by Professor Bilders Braintree.

Special engagement of the following distinguished artistes from London:

HERR HERMANN SCHAUCK. (In German lieder.)
SIGNOR PIZZICATO. (In Italian opera.)
MADAME CAVERINA BOMBADA. (In arias from Puccini and Bizet.)

Members of the Lodge are invited to bring one guest.
Non-members, charge 2/-, including light refreshments.

The hall was constructed to hold four hundred and fifty people. When the Grand Master got up to address the company there were thirty-seven people present. Before the last item was reached there were fifty-eight, of whom four had paid. The audience seemed to consist mostly of women and young children, who made a bee-line for the cakes and lemonade directly it was over.

Mr. Priest knew then that the game was up. He was flogging a dead horse. You couldn't drive git-up-and-git into a town which regarded this rich fare so perfunctorily.

"The point is, dad," said James, when they got home, "I don't believe Tibbelsford *wants* uplift."

"It isn't a question of wanting. It's a question of understanding," said Mr. Priest, who didn't like anyone else, least of all his family, to make conclusions. "One might just as well expect hyænas to understand double-entry."

He passed a restless and disturbed night. In the morning he was strolling in the garden, admiring the rose shoots. He saw Mr. Mildrew drive up in his little dog-cart, get

The audience seemed to consist mostly of women and young children, who made a bee-line for the cakes and lemonade directly it was over.

out, and walk briskly up the path to the tradesmen's entrance. Mr. Mildrew was notoriously the best and most respectable grocer in the town. He was a dapper little man with a neat black moustache. For seventeen years he had been in the habit of driving round the neighbourhood and calling on his customers for orders. His theory was that he liked to come in touch with them personally, to find out their exact requirements, and to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings.

" Now, that's the kind of feller," reflected Mr. Priest. He went up to him and called out : " Hi, Mildrew ! "

" Good morning, sir," said the grocer.

" Now you're the kind of feller who knows things. You've heard all about my move here, you know, the Bisons and that ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Now, why, for one, didn't you come to my show last night ? "

The grocer cleared his throat.

" There were a lot of things on in the town last night, sir."

" A lot of things on in the town ! What kind of things ? "

" Well, sir, for one thing there was the football club general meeting. There was the pig-breeders' dinner, a discussion at the church school about the revision of the Prayer Book, the committee meeting to discuss the presentation to Farmer Williams for saving that boy's life in the Tibbel, the fly-fishers' smoking concert, and several others."

" My ! but—Gosh ! where did all these things happen ? "

" Some at the church schools, but mostly in the Love-a-Duck, sir."

" And what were you at ? "

" Oh, I had, of course, to go to the Masonic dinner. That was in the ballroom at the Love-a-Duck."

" What ? "

" The Masonic dinner."

" Masonic ? I've lived here all this time and I've never heard that there was such a thing as a Mason in the town."

" No, sir, one doesn't often hear about—the Masons. They don't talk much."

" They don't ! Why not ? Is there anything to be ashamed of ? "

" Oh, no, sir. It's just that we don't do it."

" But Golly ! This beats me. Masons, eh ? There am I a member of the Flamingoes, the Elks, the Beavers—we're proud of our lodges. We don't mind letting folks know."

" No, sir ? Well, I suppose it's just a different way of looking at things."

" And I suppose you got drunk ? "

" Oh, no, sir. Some of the gentlemen drank beer. There was no case of excess. I myself am a teetotaller."

" And who belongs to the darn thing ? "

" Most of the best people, if I may say so, sir. I am not, of course, allowed to divulge names."

" Well, I'm jiggered ! "

" By the way, sir, I called on Mr. Selden Wright this morning. He asked me to give you a message. He said that if at any time you wanted to let that lecture hall he is looking out for a garage, and would be pleased to make you an offer."

Mr. Priest was furious.

" Well, of all the darned insolence ! Listen, Mildrew ! I came back to this God-forsaken little town with the idea of helping, boosting, getting a move on things. And nobody helps me, nobody understands me, nobody believes in me. How do you account for it ? "

" I don't know, sir. I suppose it's just a different way of doing things. The people here like what they're used to. Anyway—there it is."

He tapped his book, gazed reflectively at the large red house, and then added, brightly :—

" By the way, sir, are there any orders for groceries this morning ? "

THE BRETHREN

by

IAN HAY

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

A BIG barn of a church in an English seaport town. The entire building is crammed with men—men in their Sunday clothes—men who appear to live on the sea or by the sea or for the sea—sailors of every grade; longshoremen; mechanics, firemen, dock hands, fitters; and comparative laymen who saw wood or heat rivets. Anyhow, it is an audience composed entirely of men who work for a living—and what prouder designation could any assembly desire?

It is just after three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, and all are present as members of a certain Brotherhood, gathered firstly for the transaction of routine business; secondly, to listen to a discourse from an invited guest.

At the present moment the guest is sitting on the edge of a chair in the vestry, undergoing instruction as to procedure.

"This Brotherhood of ours," explains the chairman, "has branches all over the country, chiefly in the big industrial centres. Anybody can join, and any time he doesn't like it he can get out. We are non-political, non-sectarian, and we aren't subsidized or financed either by Trades Unions or employers of labour: we just run ourselves. We meet every second Sunday afternoon in a borrowed church. We sing a hymn or two and read a chapter, after which we transact any necessary business. After that we listen to our invited speaker. We invite all sorts—we had a Bolshie last week, and an explorer the time before, and the Bishop of London the time before that—but mainly they are just men who are known to have done something, or written something, or seen something, and who feel like coming and telling us about it. They can say anything they like: we want to hear every side. No one takes offence, and there are no reporters. We can't afford to pay any fee beyond bare travelling expenses, but we don't often get a refusal. The very best seem to like coming to us, and they seem to give us their best. Half an hour is about the usual, but I expect you will know when they want you to stop. Not that they'll say anything. I suppose you won't mind a few questions at the end, though? If you've said anything they disagree with, naturally they like to get back at you a bit: it keeps the keen ones from interrupting, too. The questions will be handed up on slips of paper, and you'll get a chance to study them for a few minutes during the vote of thanks. Now, sir, if you're ready, we'll go and face the music."

The committee and their guest pass through the door and mount the rostrum, half pulpit, half platform. A thousand husky male voices are uplifted in a hymn—one of the few real, rampant war-songs of militant Christianity—"Onward, Christian Soldiers!" no less. Someone hands the visitor an open hymn-book, and he takes cover behind it, gratefully. He is feeling a little dazed, which is not altogether surprising.

There are faces everywhere—in front, on either side, and even behind him—faces bearded and faces shaven, not always surmounting collars. Some of them are not too prosperous, for the spectre of post-war unemployment stalks abroad in the land. There are more faces above him; the three-sided gallery is full to overflowing, and hangs low: by stretching out a hand he could exchange greetings with half-a-dozen total strangers. . . . .

Onward, then, ye people;
Join our happy throng—

The last verse!—and he finds himself tongue-tied in advance, for a definite reason. Until ten minutes ago he had not been greatly concerned with the text of his discourse. He would be sure to think of something, he had decided in the train. An expression of thanks for the honour implied by the invitation; a humorous story or two; and a few words about thrift, and loyalty, and self-discipline, would about

meet the bill. Now his vague complacency is gone—vanished. This is not an audience, he has suddenly realized, to be patronized or taken lightly.

The hymn ends and everyone sits down. Then the chairman takes charge.

"Before we get to our speaker," he says, "we have some ordinary business to attend to. First of all there is a blind Brother, Joe Potter, who would like to come here regularly, if someone will undertake to bring him along. That would make seven blind men altogether—and a jolly good record! Joe lives at 28, Pleasant Row. Who will take on the job? No use offering unless you can be regular!"

A dozen hands shoot up.

"Jack Lane, you live nearest to Joe: you'll do best. That's settled, then. I'll tell Joe you'll call for him next time, about

a quarter to three. Thank you, Jack! Now, the Boot Fund. It's been a baddish winter, as you know, and, to cut a long story short, we shall require another fifteen pound."

He goes into some detail now, and the interior economy of the Boot Fund is laid bare. There is a suggestion of a discerning and businesslike fairy godmother about the whole business. Thus:—

A parent, we will say, in need of a pair of boots for a pair of small and restless feet, brings the owner of the feet to the Brotherhood, and the feet are fitted with boots almost without question. But only as a loan. The boots are the property of the Brotherhood; they are stamped with the name of the Brotherhood, and must be returned when no longer required. Thus due economy is observed, while the sensitive are relieved of the dread stigma of accepted charity. What is more, the Brotherhood, who are essentially men of the world, maintain a painfully complete understanding with the pawnbrokers of the town on this subject; and woe betide the parent or guardian who attempts to transmute the boots of the Brotherhood into easy money.

Assuredly, it is the poor that help the poor. Of their own initiative, and from their own slender resources, the Brotherhood have contrived that not one child in this town shall go ill-shod all through this long winter, bad times or no. And this was the audience which the speaker had proposed to regale with a couple of pointless yarns and an exhortation to self-respect!

The chairman is introducing him. He hears his name mentioned—his record as a soldier and pioneer—and a word of appreciation at his coming. Then comes the summons.

He rises to his feet. His whole audience rise with him, applauding hospitably. Then, suddenly, they subside, and he finds himself alone in a sea of upturned faces. Crumpled up in the palm of his hand are certain rough notes of what he had vaguely thought of saying. Thank God, no one knows what!

There is an appreciable interval of expectant silence, while he recasts his thoughts. He is a sincere man, which means that he is not a ready speaker. Presently he begins—haltingly, after the manner of Englishmen of his caste.

"This is my first encounter with your—er—organization. I had no real knowledge of its nature until five minutes ago; and now that the knowledge has been revealed to me—well, it has rather taken the wind out of my sails!" He smiles, disarmingly. "You see, you invited me down here to give you a 'message,' if I had one; and you have started off by giving one to me. This!"

"When I came in here I hadn't the vaguest idea what to say; now, since I have looked into your faces, I know."

With a dumb, expressive gesture he indicates the teeming, virile audience—the Boot Fund—Joe Potter—everything.

"You make me feel very proud," he continues presently—"and—very humble, too. You understand what I mean—proud to be your guest; humble when I see so much done, with so little fuss, by men who might well be excused for doing nothing. And that brings me to my message—my text—or whatever you prefer to call it. I may say that, whatever it is, it has only just occurred to me!" He smiles again. "When I came in here I hadn't the vaguest idea what to say; now, since I have looked into your faces, I know. It's this. What—what a tremendous national responsibility rests upon people like us—like you and me—and how little other people realize the fact!"

Here is something unexpected. There is a sudden stir, and a ripple passes over the sea of faces.

"I am a soldier; many of you are or have been soldiers or sailors. All of you are in a sense soldiers, accustomed to carry out the ideas and the orders of other people, whether in a dockyard, or in a factory, or in a barrack-square. And the point to observe is this. It does not matter whether these orders and ideas are good or bad—and *we* know that they are frequently rotten——"

There is a sudden murmur of appreciation.

"Our job is simply to carry those orders out, to make those ideas work, somehow. And somehow we do it—so regularly that people pay us the compliment of taking what we do as a matter of course. And here's something that explains why. The main strength of our country lies, and always has lain, in our men-at-arms—our Other Ranks, as we call them—whether military or industrial. As a nation we have seldom been wisely directed or well led in all our history; most of our successes, whether in war or peace, have been 'soldiers' battles.' And for that, I repeat, the credit mainly belongs to the men like you and me—the men who feel that the ship must be kept going somehow, whatever may be happening on the bridge or quarter-deck—or, for that matter, among the malcontents in the fo'c'sle—the men who keep on *trying*, whatever the politicians, or the profiteers, or the doctrinaires, or the agitators may be after. We grumble and grouse, of course,

and tell one another we are fed up—and usually we are—but we carry on. We expect no thanks, and we don't get any; the ship goes forward, and that is all we care about. Win or lose, sink or swim, in good times or in bad, the ship—the cause—the job—and not ourselves! That's the stuff. So long as that spirit endures—and I have living, vigorous proof before my eyes at this very moment that it does—our country, this England, about which we say so little and feel so much, is all right." His voice shakes oddly. "Quite all right!" He pauses, to a sudden deep murmur of comprehension. Then :—

"I hardly like to dig up war-stories at this date——"

Reassuring sounds are audible. It is only the people who were not in the war, or of it, who regarded the topic as antiquated.

"Well, here is one which illustrates the spirit I have been trying to describe. It isn't a story at all, really; it's just a memory that sticks—of a man whom I met in the spring of 'seventeen. He had just been fished out of the sea, with thirty or forty others, somewhere off the north-west coast of Ireland. His ship, a fair-sized ocean-going freighter, bound for the United States, had been torpedoed at sight. Luckily a destroyer came up at the right moment, sent the submarine to the bottom, and rescued the survivors of the freighter's crew.

"I talked a good deal to this man. He was a ship's fireman, and this was his fourth consecutive attempt in five weeks to complete a voyage across the Atlantic. Four times he had shipped, and four times his ship had been sunk or disabled. And here he was, homeward bound once more, prepared without any fuss or boasting, or self-pity, to sign on for a fifth trip—to take a fifth chance below the water-line, of death by shock, or drowning, or escaping steam, as the merest matter of routine. He said nothing about glory, or the fatherland, or his ancestors, or the flag, as many equally brave men of other races might have done. He cursed the Hun a bit, borrowed a dry shirt, and went back to his job. He was just one of the people whom we take for granted, and are not disappointed.

"I often wonder what became of him. I hope he came through, but I doubt it. He never even told me his name: but to this day, whenever I travel on the ocean and I see a man with a swab of cotton waste round his neck snatching a mouthful of fresh air at a porthole or the top of an engine-room ladder, I take off my hat to him—in memory of my unknown friend, and of the lesson he taught me."

TEN minutes later the visitor sits down, with no very clear idea of what he has been saying; because, for the first time in an intermittent and agonizing career as a public speaker, Inspiration has marked him for her own and borne him aloft to heights where men do not hesitate or measure their words, or stop to wonder whether they are making fools of themselves or not, but simply speak that which is within them. He knows he has spoken for his full half-hour, to an audience which asked for more. His last and clearest impression is of having been permitted, by acclamation, to offer his travelling expenses as a very humble contribution to the Boot Fund.

Lastly, he realizes that, although he is sitting down, everyone else is standing up. The chairman explains.

"They always stand, sir, when the speaker rises to speak: that is politeness. But if they do it again when he sits down—well, that's different." He offers a hand, on behalf of the audience. "Now, before we finish up with 'The King,' will you answer questions?"

"I'll try."

But to-day there is only one question. It is not even passed up in the usual written form; it is asked from under the gallery, by one of the odd hundred who could not find a seat.

"Could you kindly tell the members present the name of that torpedoed ship, sir—the one you was telling us about?"

"Certainly. The *Obispo*, of the Omega Steam Packet Company, outward bound for New York."

"And the fireman, sir—the man you say you hoped came through? The man you lent that dry shirt to?"

There is a hum of quickened interest Here is the human touch.

"I never said *I* lent him the shirt," protests the visitor, colouring.

"But you did, sir. I've got it on now. And I came through all right, as you hoped. Do you want the shirt back, sir; because my old woman——"

There is a great roar of laughter.

"Keep it, please!" shouts the donor, confusedly.

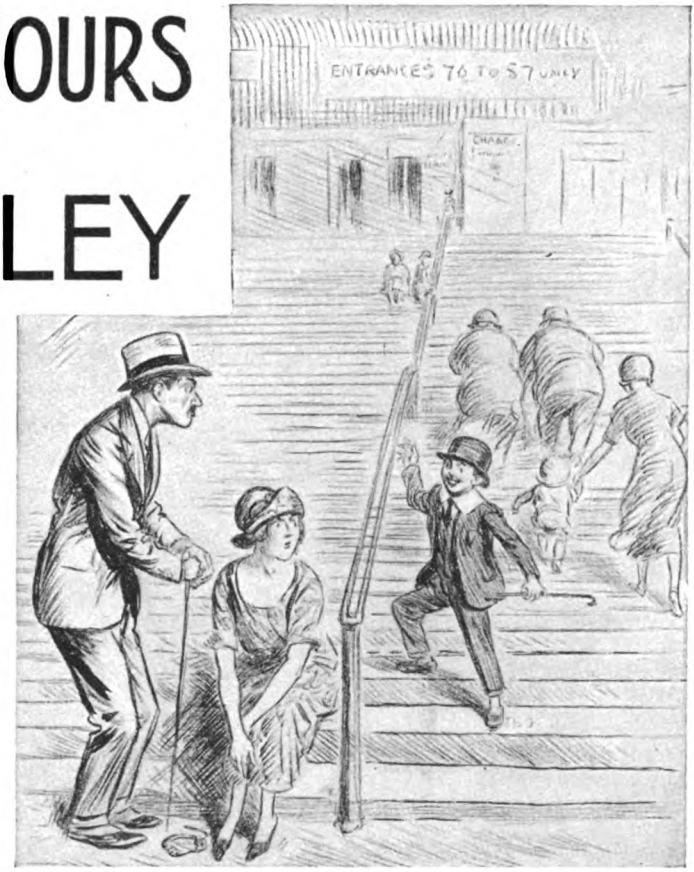
The chairman rises.

"*That*," he announces, with a solemn twinkle in his eye, "makes our guest eligible for life-membership, doesn't it? Those in favour? Carried unanimously."

THE HUMOURS OF WEMBLEY

By FENN SHERIE.

THERE is many a jest spoken in true words. The provincial schoolboy who stated in a recent examination that "London is a place near Wembley" may have been an unconscious humorist, but he was certainly a conscientious historian, for even the wonders of London have temporarily taken second place to those of the British Empire Exhibition. Amidst the crowds of fascinated sightseers of all countries, creeds, and classes who have flocked, are flocking, or are about to flock to view the "British Empire in Miniature" and sample the delights of its attendant side-shows, humour—natural, spontaneous, and often unconscious—abounds.



Son (to over-tired parents who have just had a long day at Wembley): "Come on—I'll race you to the top!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

Old Lady (who has heard a lot about the South African train, pointing to the giant switchback): "I understand they give you a quite excellent lunch on this railway, my dear, and very reasonable, too."

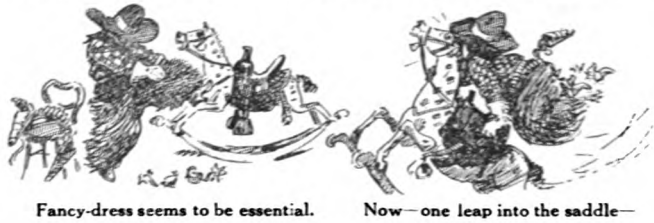
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

Many people who have not yet visited Wembley fail to realize the vastness of the world's greatest show. Said one country yokel to another whom he met in the parlour of the village inn, "I do 'ear that all yew've got to do is to take a train to that there Wembley, and almost anybody will tell ee where the Exhibition is." On the other hand, to the Londoner, the Exhibition and Wembley are synonymous—as is reflected by the story of

The Humours of Wembley

RODEO IN THE HOME.

We shall have to Rodeo. So it might be as well to practise at home.



Fancy-dress seems to be essential. Now—one leap into the saddle—

Climb up the neck of your steed— Regain your balance— Wave your hat—

—or spurs— and dismount gracefully. That's all.

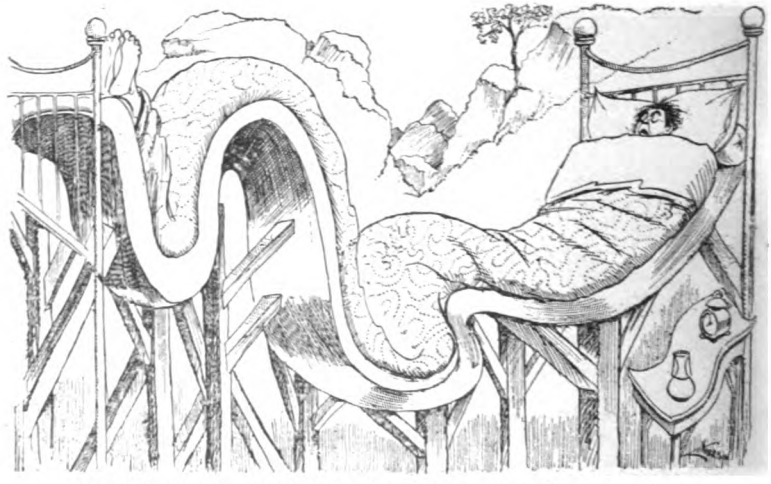
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

the lady in the East-end whose spouse was threatening to fight a neighbour. "Come on, Alf," she shouted; "don't make a bloomin' Wembley of yourself!"

Quite a different aspect of the subject is provided by the reported remark of a hustling American visitor upon his return home: "Waal, I did the Exhibition all right, but I can't say I saw the whole of London—you really want more than one day to cover them properly."

Upon arriving inside the grounds most people are instantly impressed by the vastness of the place, the beauty of the gardens, and the grandeur of the architecture, and are duly overwhelmed by a sense of their own insignificance. It is amusing to learn, therefore, from one of Messrs. Cook's guides that a certain North-country visitor's first action upon arriving was to enter the official inquiry bureau and ask in a loud voice, "Eh, lad--where's t' beer tent?" It is only fair to add, however, that even the most self-centred individual soon succumbs to the spell of the Exhibition and returns home full of enthusiasm at all that he has seen and encountered.

The juvenile point of view is well represented in the story of the little girl who, after a prolonged gaze at the diminutive wonders of the Queen's Doll's House (in which, by the way, there is a copy of *The Strand*



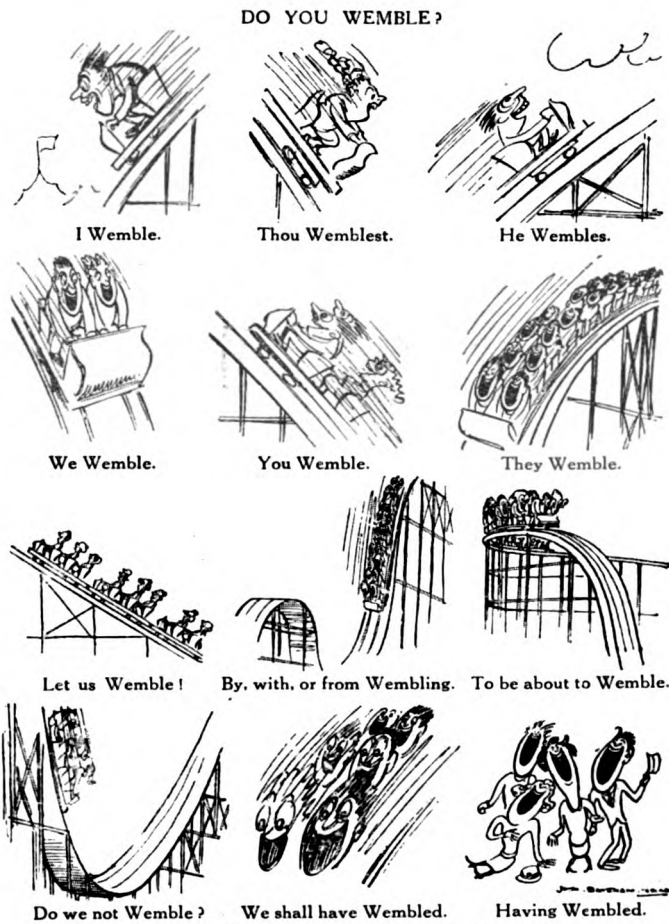
Awful dream of a gent who has been having too much scenic railway at Wembley.

By permission of "London Opinion."

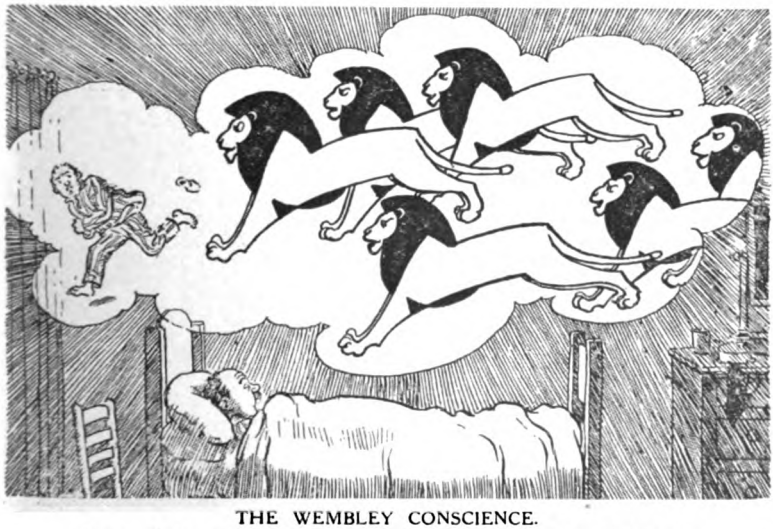
Magazine, less than half the size of a postage-stamp), said to her mother: "Does the Queen come and play with it after all the people have gone?"

Again, it is reported that a small boy, after staring with rapt admiration at the ladies who are on show in glass cases in the Palace of Beauty, turned to his father and piped out in a shrill little voice: "Daddy, what time are they fed?" Another comment, overheard by the writer in the Palace of Beauty, was that of a young lady—evidently an ardent theatre-goer—who said that she did not think much of the representation of Nell Gwynne because "it wasn't a bit like José Collins."

Plenty of humour is provided, all unwittingly, by the "know-all" who volunteers unsolicited information when showing his friends round the Exhibition. It is a fact, vouched for by one of the official guides, that a school-teacher whilst in the West African section, seeing some "coconuts" on exhibition, announced to her charges that "they grow cocoanuts in Canada, from which we get our cocoa"—and, moreover, she was distinctly annoyed upon being quietly and politely corrected. Another brainy person is said to have informed his friends that British Columbia is a place where the gramophone



By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

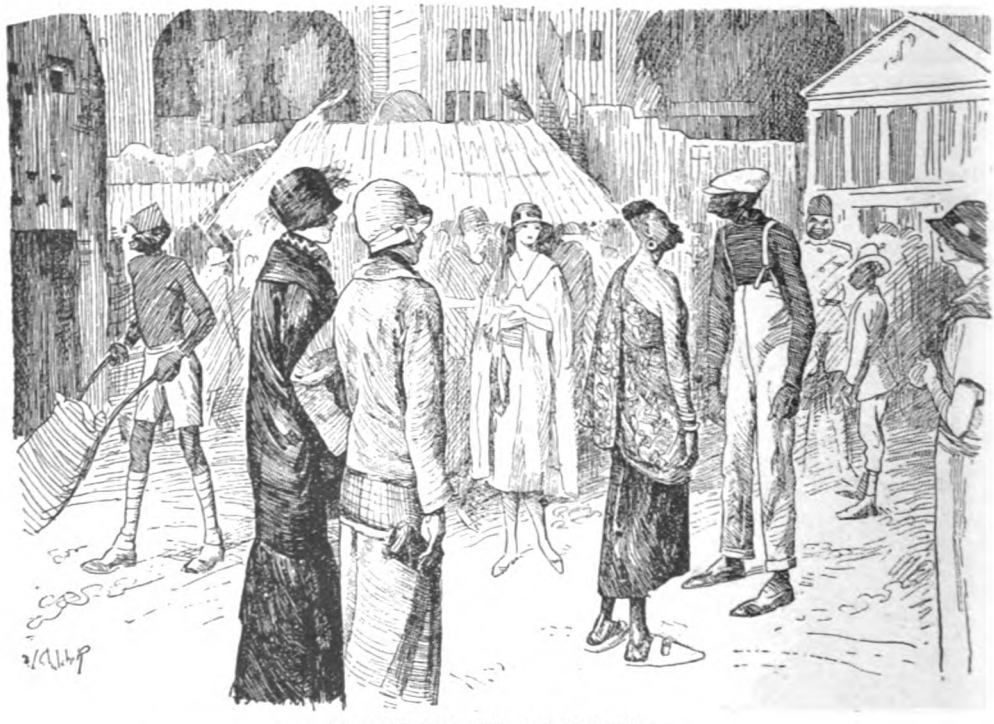


THE WEMBLEY CONSCIENCE.

Dream of the man who would not go to the British Empire Exhibition.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

"Has he been down the coal-mine, Daddy?"



LE DERNIER CRI AT WEMBLEY.

Fair Visitor: "Well, I declare that's just the cutest bit of shingling I've ever seen!"

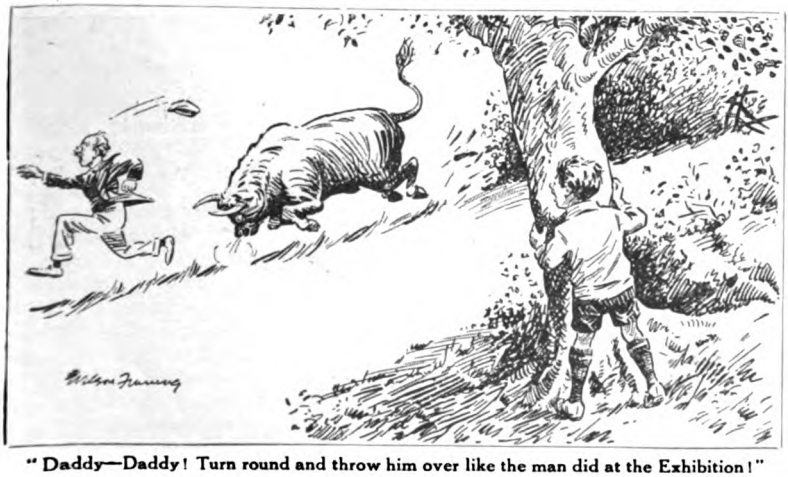
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

records come from.

The vagueness of certain members of the public upon matters anthropological is also reflected by a story told by Captain Rattray, who is in charge of the native village in the West African section. He was about to enter the compound—which, by the way, is strictly private—when he overheard a dear old lady remark to her companion: "That's the little man in charge of the harems." When it is realized that Captain Rattray is one of the greatest living authorities on Africa and its people, it is equally amusing to learn that upon one occasion, when he volunteered to show some visitors round his section and explain

ALL LANGUAGES LEAD TO WEMBLEY.

By permission of the "Daily Mirror."



"Daddy—Daddy! Turn round and throw him over like the man did at the Exhibition!"

By permission of "London Opinion."

things to them, his motives were woefully misinterpreted, for he was met with a coldly supercilious "Not today, thank you," spoken in a tone that one might employ to an over-ardent hawker of bootlaces! Another remark actually overheard at Wembley was during the playing, by the bands of the Indian

THE INDIAN SECTION AT WEMBLEY IS LIGHTED WITH DIFFERENT COLOURS AT NIGHT.

First Reveller: "Could have sworn it was pink just now—now it's green!"

Second Reveller: "Course it was pink, old man. Let's look again." (They do.)

Both together: "Good Lord! it's orange!—let's go home!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

Army, of the well-known military march, "Colonel Bogey." Said a man of the self-made type to his friends: "I can't stand this native music—it's too darned monotonous."

The questions which visitors fire at the official guides are delightfully naïve. One elderly lady who was looking at the large bandstand and its surrounding dance floor, which occupy a prominent position in a corner of the Exhibition grounds, inquired: "And is that really the place where the Cup Final was held—or am I thinking of Wimbledon?"

Another, upon seeing a Trinidad "flying fish," remarked with perfect seriousness: "I suppose they are the result of a cross breed between a fish and a carrier pigeon."

But the most delightful incident in the recollection of the officials in the inquiry office is that of the small boy who, having become detached from the maternal fold, popped his head through the doorway with a forlorn expression and asked: "Have you seen a lady anywhere?"

WEMBLEYDON.

A Nightmare of Confused Memories.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

THE METHODS OF SIR SAMUEL

by

WILLIAM CAINE

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BROCK

I.

THIS is the story of Tony Batten, and how he achieved happiness and a fair livelihood through scrupulously neglecting to profit by the advantages of a first-rate education. It is written expressly for young men who have their own way to make in the world, so that they may take heart from reflecting (while they play billiards) that if one dud can land safely on his feet, another may.

At his private school the child Tony learnt to fish for minnows, gudgeons, and perches.

At his public school the lad Tony learnt to fish for daces and chubs.

At his University the adolescent Tony learnt to fish for trout. Mounted at half-past nine in the morning outside the gates of Brasenose College, a motor-bicycle will transport its driver to the banks of the Coln at Fairford by ten easily, and ten is quite early enough to be on the water. And there are no better masters of the art of fly-fishing than the trout of Fairford, unless it be those of Bibury, a few miles upstream.

Tony now went to London and became a student of law in the Inner Temple; for since, I suppose, he had never yet done a stroke of honest work in his life, was obviously short of brains, and possessed not a scruple of initiative, it had seemed proper to his father to enter him in a profession wherein success is to be achieved alone by the industrious, the capable, and the bold. For the next two years the young gentleman idled busily over legal text-books during such time as he could bring himself to spare from catching trout in Gloucestershire, Devonshire, Yorkshire, and Scotland; while his father, who made boots in Northampton, paid a handsome allowance quarterly to his credit at the Pall Mall branch of Burnaby's Bank and hoped for the best.

Then came the Great War and Tony went soldiering.

During the war he destroyed two Germans, one Turk, and, in Northern France, the Balkans, and elsewhere, several thousand trout.

When he was demobilized in the March following the Armistice he came home, without a scratch on him, in the pink of condition and aged twenty-seven, to find that the Russian revolution, after having ruined his father, had killed him.

Fortunately, nobody but Tony depended upon Tony's future exertions, because he was an only child and his mother had been dead for ten years. The thought of Tony, quite evidently without qualifications for any job whatever anywhere, appalled his family. It is impossible for a comfortably-off lot of people simply to wash their hands of a young man who has just been gallantly battling with the enemies of his country during four years. They have to make an attempt to do something for him or brand themselves monsters. But what could these poor rich people do for Tony?

The miserable anticipations of Tony's

family need not detain us, for they did not last long and they were never realized, since Tony got a job at once. This was the way of it.

His uncle Walter, head now of the clan, felt called upon first to attempt the impossible. Having inside information with regard to his nephew's hopeless unsuitability for any commercial position, he did not waste time in offering him a place with his own firm, but gave him a letter of introduction to his acquaintance, Sir Samuel Marx, the Empire-maker.

He also wrote another letter privately to Sir Samuel in which he said, among other things: "If you can find a job of any kind for the boy I shall, of course, be eternally grateful. There may be something abroad for him. He is perfectly honest and his war record is good, but I fear he hasn't much intelligence. He was not brought up to earn his own living, and, so far as I can discover, the only thing he has ever mastered is trout fishing."

II.

"AND what, Major Batten," said Sir Samuel, "what kind of work is it that you want to do?"

"Why, Sir Samuel," said Tony, confidentially, "the fact is that I don't precisely want to do any work at all. Work's a thing I dislike very much. But, you see, I'm broke to bits, and if I don't work I shall perish of starvation, for I haven't got the brains for crime."

"Well," said Sir Samuel, while his eye dwelt thoughtfully upon the comeliness of this very hopeless applicant, "what do you think you *can* do?"

"I can wage war," said Tony.

"For the moment," said Sir Samuel, "there is rather a slump in war. Anything else?"

"Yes," said Tony; "I can catch trout."

"Ah," said Sir Samuel. "Now I wish to Heaven I could. I've had a trout-stream for a year in Wiltshire, and it's chock-full of fishes, and I've not managed to land one of them so far. Do you think you could teach me?"

"I'd like nothing half so well," said Tony. "What is it that bothers you particularly? The wind? The drag? Or can't you cock your fly?"

"Everything bothers me," said Sir Samuel. "I simply can't do it."

"Oh, that's skittles, you know," cried Tony. "Anyone can do it if they have the right tackle and will apply themselves properly. It's nearly all a matter of application. I expect you've never wholly given your mind to it. I expect you think about business while you fish. Anything like that is fatal, of course. You'll never be a fisherman unless you learn to concentrate your whole jolly soul on what you're doing. When shall I come and put you through your paces? Any day you say'll suit me. My time's entirely my own at present, you know."

"I'm going down there for a week to-day at two o'clock. Can you be ready, if I call for you on my way?"

"Of course."

"And shall we say twenty guineas for the fee?"

"My dear sir!" cried Tony. "Do you think I'd take a fee for teaching a man to fish on a well-stocked chalk stream?"

"I don't see why not. You have knowledge. I want it. Why shouldn't I pay for it? If you refuse, Major Batten, I shall think you aren't serious in your wish to earn a living. In fact, I shall wash my hands of you. I shall write to your uncle to say that I find you are too fine a gentleman for me."

Tony thought this over. "You're right," he said at last. "I'll take your twenty guineas, Sir Samuel. But I shall expect you to let me earn them. I mean, you'll have to dig in at your fishing like a nigger. At the first sign of slackness or lack of concentration on your part, I shall cancel the contract. If you allow me to suspect for an instant, while we're at work, that you're thinking about your rotten companies, I shall revert to the gentleman at once, and I shall tell my uncle that you're not the kind of person with whom I care to do business."

III.

WE need not, again, linger over the instruction of Sir Samuel. It is enough to say that the financier proved himself a worthy scholar and a scrupulous man of business, and that though Tony kept him hard at it from ten to six every day, with no more than a quarter of an hour for lunch and another for tea, and then after dinner till dark, he never once found occasion to renounce his fee. The fat, middle-aged Empire-builder possessed concentration and application, of that there could be no doubt whatever, and (once he had been put on the right path) improved every minute. Tony was delighted with him. "By Gog!" he said on the last day of their week, when Sir Samuel had covered himself with glory by rising and hooking a two-pound trout on a swift glide and netting it, shortly afterwards, all without a bungle—"by Gog, my good sir, what the deuce of a pity it is you should have wasted all your life up to now, floating those awful companies of yours! If you'd only begun trout-fishing thirty

Sir Samuel had covered himself with glory by rising and hooking a two-pound trout.

years ago, I believe you'd now be perhaps the finest angler that ever threw a fly."

"Ah," said Sir Samuel, modestly, "but think what a good teacher I've had."

"Yes," said Tony, "that's true. Still, I'm bound to give you credit for the way you've put your mind on your task. No wonder you're rolling in money, if that's the way you tackle problems of finance. I shall always have a greater respect for millionaires after this. When I push off to-morrow——"

"Don't," said Sir Samuel. "Stay here and look after my water."

"Stay here and look after your water?" cried Tony. "But you've got Hogben to do that. He's a perfectly sound man. I wouldn't do old Hogben out of his job for anything."

"You'll never be rich, Tony, I'm afraid," said Sir Samuel. "But I mean it. Hogben won't go. You'll be over him."

"It's ludicrous," said Tony, "to have two men on this water. There's not enough for them to do."

"Now see here, Tony. I'm going to make this water the best in all England. It's an ambition that's been born in me this last day or two. Well, I want better brains than Hogben's for that, don't you think? I'm going to start a trout-farm. Do you think Hogben could run a trout-farm?"

"Not a chance of it," said Tony. "But how do you know *I* could? I know nothing about trout-farming."

"You know the devil of a lot about trout."

"I'd like awfully to try, of course," said Tony. "In fact, it would be like a beautiful dream. And I'll bet I could make this water into something really hot. But it'll all take time."

"We both have time. I'm only fifty-two. I'll give you four hundred a year, and you can live at old Mrs. Crump's cottage—and she'll do for you like a mother—until we can find you quarters of your own. What do you say?"

Tony reflected. "Keepers," he said at last, "are supposed not to fish their employer's water. Naturally and quite right. But, Lord love you, Sir Samuel, do you think I could live here and be up and down the river all day if I couldn't fish it sometimes? That would be exactly my idea of hell. Now here's a business proposition. If I can have one day's fishing a week, with a three-brace limit, I'll come like a bird, and for three hundred. If not, it's off."

"If it's your idea of a business proposition," said Sir Samuel, "to pay a hundred pounds a year for one day a week on my water when you could get a full rod on one just as good for half the price, it's not mine. But I've made my wealth only by dealing with worse business men than myself, and so I accept your condition. When can you begin?"

IV.

AS they walked home along the valley road Sir Samuel paused at the garden gate of a small ivy-covered house. "In here," he said, "lives a young lady I'd like you to meet. We'll see if she's at home." He opened the gate and waved Tony onwards.

Before they came up to the door it opened and there emerged a young girl of remarkable comeliness. She had bobbed golden hair, great blue eyes, an adorable little nose, a ripe red mouth, and dimples. She was tall and broad-shouldered and large-waisted, and her arms were strong and her legs were sturdy and her feet were considerable. About her ankles the less said the better. She wore an ill-made black skirt, a huge white woollen jersey, thick white stockings, and heavy brogues. A vital type. A picture of healthy English maidenhood. Even Tony, to whom girls had always been objects of small interest (since it is impossible to flirt and fish at the same time)—even Tony, I say, was moved to admiration. "Sink me!" he thought. "Here's a stunning young heifer."

"Hullo, Sam!" she cried, in a robust but musical voice. "I saw you at the gate. Step in, mud and all. Alfred's in the sitting-room grousing over his *Morning Post*. Do you want tea?"

"No, thanks, Lorna," said Sir Samuel. "I've just looked in to make you and Major Batten acquainted. Tony, this is Miss Redford, my *fiancée*."

Tony very nearly said, "Good Lord!" but, having admirable manners, didn't. Involuntarily, however, he glanced first at the fat, dark-skinned, middle-aged Jew, who stood beside him, and then back at the luscious young thing in the porch. At the same time he got his hat off and made his bow and surrendered his right hand to a strenuous grasp.

"Oh, rot!" the girl said. "You must come in, of course. Alfred will be devastated if you don't. He's got a hump like the Great Pyramid. Be saints and come in and do something to diminish it for him. And I'll brew you a pot of Bohea in three minutes."

"I'm afraid we haven't time," said Sir Samuel. "Major Batten's coming to live here and look after my trout. We're going to make the water the best in England."

"Splendid!" she said. "But you won't get me to fish for your slimy old trout, Sam. Not much. They're all right for breakfast and they're useful for nourishing otters

for me to hunt, but when it comes to sitting about on thistles waiting for them to rise, I prefer to leave that to the old and infirm."

Tony, instead of praying out loud for a thunderbolt to fall upon the head of this blasphemer, laughed. "All right," he said, "Carry right on with your otter-worrying, Miss Redford. The more of the brutes you do in, the better Sir Samuel and I will be pleased. We won't try to divert you from your good work."

At this moment an old gentleman joined them. One glance at him was enough to show whence Sir Samuel's *fiancée* had obtained her physique and her good looks. He was a huge and very handsome old gentleman, with a great red face, close-cropped white hair, and a large yellow moustache. He wore a shabby suit of grey flannels and he carried in his hands a pipe and a newspaper.

"What's this I heard about not coming in, my dear Sam?" he demanded, boisterously. "Of course you're coming in. God forbid that you should ever approach my humble door without tasting of my humble hospitality. Upon one small spot of what passes nowadays for whisky I positively insist. Bring your friend in. Bring him in, I say. Lorna, some glasses. Fly!"

"This is Major Batten, Alfred," said the girl. "This, Major Batten, is my ancient father. Major Batten is coming to live here and be nurse to Sam's trout, Alfred. Isn't that nice for them?" She vanished into the house.

"Ah!" said Mr. Redford. "Coming to live here, are you, Major Batten? Delightful. You'll be a great addition to our village circle, I'm sure. Yes, indeed." He spoke with some effect of breeziness, but his blue eye had suddenly hardened. Tony received the impression that this bluff old fellow didn't mean quite what he said, was not perfectly pleased to have his village circle thus enlarged.

"Enter, gentlemen. Enter," said Mr. Redford.

Sir Samuel, however, was proof against his persuasions and they left a moment or two later and with no further sight of Lorna. Nor, it may be observed, had Mr. Redford made any suggestion to Tony that he should return.

Sir Samuel gave some explanations. "Mr. Redford," he said, "is an archæologist, and he is engaged at present, I believe, on a study of the prehistoric history of Wiltshire. He spends most of his time on Salisbury Plain. He has been a widower for some years. Lorna is his only child."

"He seems a jolly old bird," said Tony.

"Oh!" said Sir Samuel. "He is, of course, an immensely jolly old bird."

"And when's the wedding to be?"

"I don't quite know. Perhaps in the autumn. Perhaps next spring. She's very young, you know."

"She's a marvel," said Tony. "May I congratulate you, Sir Samuel?"

"Thank you," said Sir Samuel. "Yes, Lorna's a wonderfully beautiful girl. I hope you and she are going to be very good friends."

"Well, rather!" cried Tony with enthusiasm. "If we're not, it won't be my fault, I can promise you. It's a pity she doesn't care for fishing, though."

"Oh, well," said Sir Samuel, "perhaps you can play tennis with her sometimes. You see, it's a bit dull for her here, as she's a stranger in these parts and the people round about aren't very ready to allow themselves to be known. And of course I have to be away in London a great deal."

"I expect she can give me forty in a game and lick my head off," said Tony. "But I'll do my best, naturally."

"Good," said Sir Samuel, and turned the talk into other channels.

V.

NEXT day Tony accompanied Sir Samuel back to London in Sir Samuel's motor-car, and the same evening was back at Buzby-Stapleton with all his possessions, which one trunk, a kit-bag, a canvas sausage, and a rod-case comfortably held. Old Mrs. Crump gave him a most motherly welcome and set an excellent plain dinner before him. After dinner he went and got hold of Hogben and with him surveyed his kingdom. He found his future lieutenant extremely friendly. This didn't surprise Tony in the least, because he was accustomed to nothing but friendliness from peasants, of whom in his day he had encountered thousands; but it may be that Sir Samuel could have given him reasons for the keeper's amiability.

They parted at Hogben's cottage about nine and Tony strolled up the valley road at peace with all the world, even with his relations, and among them particularly with his Uncle Walter. "This," said Tony to his soul, "is very much all right."

And upon that he came to the house of the Redfords, to find the girl Lorna leaning upon her garden gate and smoking a cigarette—so his nose told him—of a peculiarly base quality.

She wore a black evening gown and a string of amber beads. Her arms, shoulders, and bosom were bare to the fortunate evening air.

She greeted him kindly. "Hullo, Major Batten!" she said. "You've wasted no time.

Went off with the Lord of the Manor this morning, didn't you? Mother Crump doing you well, I hope."

"Tremendous," said Tony. "I say, that's a frightful fag you're smoking. Don't you know any better, or is it just vice with you? Because if not, do have one of mine." He held out his case.

"It's neither," she said, simply, as she helped herself. "It's lack of means. When I'm Lady Marx I shall burn nothing under thirty shillings the hundred with platinum tips and my coat of arms on every example." While Tony was getting out his match-box she plucked a *briquet* from a bag that hung on her wrist, struck a spark, and inhaled a deep breath. "Yes," she said, "that's tobacco. Why not come in and have a chatty hour with Alfred and me? It'll cheer the poor old darling up. He's awfully pipped to-night. He generally is, you know, unless he's found a flint battle-axe or something equally stimulating during the day. It's his gout. He gets it in the fingers. From grubbing in the earth, I expect."

Half an hour later the weak beam of light which came out of the front door was obscured and the voice of Mr. Redford was peevishly raised. "Lorna!" he cried.

"Hullo!" she called.

"What the devil are you at out there?" he inquired. "I want my grog. Is the kettle on?"

"It's probably boiled over and put the fire out by now," she said. "I'll go and see. But here's Major Batten. Come and bring him in for a drink." She left Tony at the gate and ran indoors.

Mr. Redford approached through the scented gloom.

"That Major Batten?" he inquired, frigidly. "You must excuse me if I don't second my daughter's invitation, but the fact is, I'm not a bit well to-night and I'm just off to bed. S'm'other evening, perhaps. But I don't keep much company, you know. At my age a man wants to get between the sheets betimes, you know. Good night to ye, Major Batten." He turned and shambled into the house, closing the door emphatically behind him.

Tony grinned after him. "That," he said to himself, "is what might be termed the office all right, all right; and never did I see it given with more beautiful tact. Not a very hospitable old gent, I think. Or perhaps a head keeper isn't quite up to his notion of a boon companion. That's it, possibly. Now, why should such a very nice, friendly girl have such a nasty, unfriendly old father? Well, she said her mother was a darling, so she did."

He went back to his rooms and slept gloriously all night.

VI.

TONY never got inside the ivy-covered house. For, when he came in to lunch on the day following his second arrival at Buzby-Stapleton, he found Mr. Redford in possession of his sitting-room. At first sight of the old gentleman he supposed (in spite of the hour) that this was a call of ceremony, that amends were being made him for his treatment of the previous night; but this flattering illusion was quickly dispelled.

"Lorna!" cried Mr. Redford. "Hullo!" she

As he entered the room Mr. Redford got briskly up from the chair in which he had been reading one of Tony's books—it was called "The Management of a Trout-Stream"—and said, while he put his right hand into his trousers pocket: "I came, Major Batten, to tell you that I don't wish you to become intimate with my daughter."

The civil smile vanished from Tony's face. "Very good, Mr. Redford," he said. "Am I to take it that you don't think Sir Samuel Marx's introduction good enough?" He spoke with great dignity.

"Is that a threat?" cried Mr. Redford.

"Certainly not. Sir Samuel will naturally never hear anything about this from me. I point out to you, however, that he evidently desired me to be acquainted with the lady he is going to marry; and I fail to see how I am to avoid meeting her in this small village. Do you suggest that I should cut her, except when I am with Sir Samuel or when she is? If so, you suggest an absurdity. I can't help knowing her."

"Of course you can't!" cried Mr. Redford, peevishly. "You misunderstand me, wilfully. What I mean is that I won't have you holding her in talk by the hour at my garden gate. My daughter, sir, is not for you to fill in your spare time with. The lady who is going to marry his employer is not for a river-watcher to entertain. Do I speak plainly?"

Tony gave up being dignified.

called. "What the devil are you at out there?" he inquired. "I want my grog."

"If," he said, "you weren't an old man, I should have great pleasure in introducing you to the toes of these boots of mine. What the hell do you mean by talking to me like this, you old goat?" He moved out of the doorway. "Pop off," he said.

Mr. Redford went purple. "You insolent young dog," he shouted. "Do you dare to hold such language to me? We shall see what Sir Samuel Marx has to say to this. Also to your conduct of last night, the moment his back was turned. And that, for your information, *is* a threat."

"You are a very uncivilized person," said Tony, "and I shall be obliged to you if you will cease to infect the atmosphere of this room in which I am about to eat my food."

Mr. Redford had a lot more to say, but it needn't be repeated. It was only froth and repetition. At last he got himself out of the house.

But, as Tony had said, it was impossible that he and Lorna should not meet one another. The girl had, no doubt, been ordered by her parent to see no more of Sir Samuel's new trout-master—nothing else could be supposed; but it is doubtful if she was more inclined to be dictated to on this matter than Tony himself. At any rate, they met. Mr. Redford, unless he was to withhold himself altogether from the study of the antiquities of Salisbury Plain—which he was quite disinclined to do—could not be always on guard. And so it happened that during the next fortnight the two young things had a fair number of talks together.

They had no fear that they were doing anything wrong or dangerous. Sir Samuel had told them to make friends, and they found it very pleasant to do his bidding. Except for her father, Lorna was the only creature in the place of Tony's own social standing. It is hardly surprising that they saw all they could of one another.

At last that happened which was so very likely to happen.

One morning Tony had a telegram to say that Sir Samuel would be coming down that evening, and, meeting Lorna on his way to the river, he told her his news, fully expecting that she had had it too. She hadn't, and said so, and then there fell a short silence between them. At last Tony said, carelessly: "I suppose you and he'll be marrying pretty soon now?" and even as he spoke a dreadful pang went through him.

"Yes," said Lorna, slowly, "I suppose we shall. Quite soon."

Upon this their eyes met and held one another for a space, while neither said a word. Then Lorna went suddenly white, and turned with some mumbled, silly excuse and walked quickly away, leaving Tony staring fixedly at the gable-end of a barn.

"God in heaven!" said Tony Batten. He put his hand up to his forehead and took it away, shining with sweat.

VII.

SIR SAMUEL, in his telegram, had bidden Tony to dinner, and, as he only arrived at Buzby-Stapleton in time for that meal, it was not until the two men were seated in the library with coffee and cigars that Tony found an opportunity of saying what he had to say.

"Sir Samuel," he began, "I've come to the conclusion that I'm not up to my job here, and I want you to accept my resignation."

"My dear boy," said Sir Samuel, "what nonsense is this? Of course you're up to your job here."

"No," said Tony. "I'm pretty good at killing trout, but when it comes to preserving them, I find I know nothing. I've been reading books, and my ignorance is terrific. You want a much more experienced man than me, if you really mean to make this fishing the best in England. And as to trout-farming, I don't know the first thing about it. I should need a year's training at least before I was fit to start one for you here. So I'm off. The only thing I'm good for is navvying in Australia."

"So you're going to desert me?" said Sir Samuel.

"No, relieve you of a dud. I won't take pay for what I can't do. I'm frightfully sorry, for you've been devilish kind to me; but if I stayed on here, it would be obtaining money under false pretences."

At the end of half an hour's vigorous argument, Tony remained obdurate; but he had had very much the worse of it.

"I simply don't understand you," said Sir Samuel. "There's something under all this. I've knocked all your reasons for resigning into shavings and you still insist. I don't believe you're playing fair with me, Tony."

"All right," said Tony, who had come to the end of his resources. "I'll play fair with you. I've fallen in love with Lorna."

"Is that so?" said Sir Samuel. "And what does *she* say to it?"

Tony sprang out of his chair on to his feet. "Good God!" he cried. "You don't think I've told her?"

Sir Samuel laughed. "All's fair in love and war, isn't it?" he asked.

"Certainly not," said Tony. "For me, at any rate. And among the things I bar is making love to the girl of a man who's been decent to me, behind his back. That's why I'm off to-morrow morning."

"Sit down, Tony. Take another cigar. I have a confession to make to you."

"Yes," said Sir Samuel, reflectively, "I thought you'd do."

"Do? What the devil do you mean? And look here; you seem to take this pretty jolly coolly. Haven't you got any blood in your body?"

"Yes," said Sir Samuel, "it's come off beautifully."

"Come off? What's come off? Will you kindly——"

"Sit down, Tony. Take another cigar. I have a confession to make to you." Tony did as he was bid. "Go ahead," he said, stiffly.

"They say," Sir Samuel continued, "that there's no fool like an old fool; but it seems that even an old fool is capable of coming to his senses; and recently I have come to mine. Lorna and her father came to live here as my tenants about two months after I bought the place. From what I know of that old man Redford it's my belief that he brought Lorna here deliberately to exhibit her, as it were, for purchase. I am a man about whom it is easy to get information, and Redford quite probably knew that I was a widower and that I had bought Buzby-Stapleton. Possibly (if I am right about this) he acted in what he supposed to be his child's interest; but I am much more inclined to believe that it was his own he consulted. Anyhow, they came. I saw. And I was conquered. I need say nothing in Lorna's praise to you. She is a wonder of beauty, and no one but an angel could put up with her father's abominable bad temper and selfishness as she does. I know he suffers from gout and that he has a struggle to keep them going and all that; but,

allowing him every excuse, he remains a quite detestable person.

"Don't imagine for one second that I think Lorna knew anything about the plot, if plot there was. She is the most innocent, straightforward creature alive and utterly incapable of anything underhand. It was only her innocence that allowed her to accept my offer of marriage. She found me not disagreeable and kind to her and her father; her heart had never been touched; the thought of providing for her father's old age no doubt occurred to her, or, more likely, was suggested to her by him. At any rate, it would weigh with her. And so she engaged herself—she, that radiant, glorious child—engaged herself to drag out her life, tied body and soul to a fat, elderly Jew financier. And she hadn't the remotest notion of what she was doing.

"At first I was in the seventh heaven of joy. I thought myself the luckiest dog in the world. But over my transports I'll draw a veil, Tony, if you don't mind. I am not precisely proud of them. Then by degrees I began to wake up to the crime I contemplated, not only against Lorna, but against myself. I came, little by little, to understand that the girl's enormous vitality had ceased to delight me and that it terrified me. I remembered all the old men with young wives that I had known, the poor old devils that I had seen at dances in London, standing about in their tight boots at an hour when they ought to have been long ago comfortably tucked up in bed, while the pretty young things they had married galloped about, clasped in the arms of handsome young gentlemen. I thought of all the aged wrecks that I had encountered on the promenades of fashionable French *plages*, tottering along beside young wives in the very flower of their physical development. And I realized, Tony, that when Lorna should be forty, I would be seventy-four. And not only that, I knew that even to-day I could never hope to keep up with her in one quarter of the violent things she would want to do. Imagine me hunting otters, Tony. Conceive me playing lawn tennis with Lorna and the young friends she would soon have about her, when she should become my wife. Think of me footing it to the gramophone till three in the morning, night after night, in a country house, never free from its parties of indefatigable guests.

"And it was at length borne in upon me with perfect conviction that I had made a thundering ass of myself.

"Somehow this crazy engagement of mine had to be broken.

"It was useless to expect Lorna to break it. In her complete ignorance of what she was doing she was quite happy to be engaged to me. I was a kind old thing; I was going to see that her father had a comfortable old age; I had a fine house with good lawn-tennis courts and the otter-hunting hereabouts is excellent. Also, as Lady Marx, she would have horses and hunt foxes regularly.

"To break it myself would be to have old Redford down on me with an action for breach of promise of marriage. That was a certainty. I knew my Redford through and through by this time. And I was not going to have myself made a public show. Nor did I intend that Lorna should be soiled by anything of the kind.

"No doubt I could have squared things privately with her father. Ten thousand pounds would buy his consent to anything. But at that I jibbed strongly. Still, it's to that it would have come if your uncle had not written me that letter about you, Tony. He said that you were interested in nothing but trout-fishing. The rest followed." He ceased and sipped cold coffee.

"WHAT do you mean, the rest followed?" Tony inquired.

"I mean that Lorna has been given a chance of getting a clean-hearted, good young husband instead of a—well, instead of no matter what. If she doesn't take it, you'll have no one but yourself to blame, Tony. And she can't very well take it unless you lay it before her, can she? In other words, Tony, go in and win, my dear lad, and take a financier's blessing on your endeavours. In still other words, stay on here, look after my fishes, and don't be an ass. The salary, I may say, will be increased to five hundred a year and——"

"And what?" said Tony.

"Seven days a week instead of one."

"Good Lord!" said Tony, "what a brick you are! But what rum, cold, crooked ways of going about things you have!"

"They seem to answer, though," said Sir Samuel.

"I hope to God you're right," said Tony. "Suppose she won't have me?"

"Oh," said Sir Samuel, easily, "let's suppose she will, for the purposes, at any rate, of our night's rest."

She did.

MR PARCHESTER AND THE GODS

by

H. H. BASHFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

I.

THE gods, they say, walk the earth no more. From the prisons that men have made for themselves of concrete and asphalt they have turned sorrowfully away. Since men have sought happiness for themselves in elevators and underground railways their older wisdom is no longer wanted. But there are others who will tell you that the gods never did walk the earth save in the imagination of men's minds; that since men began we have all of us been living in somebody else's heaven; that Mercury was but a slim youth once seen running by a sick poet who had grown stout; and that, at some moment and to some unknown observer, we have each of us in turn played the part of a god.

That is why the two men who sat at their ease in Bernard's Restaurant in the Strand may not really have been gods at all; and to themselves and their friends they would certainly not have appeared so. But to Mr. Parchester, sitting at the next table, their divinity was so obvious as to be almost uncomfortable. And the heaven in their eyes added a burden to his worries that was rapidly becoming intolerable.

For Mr. Parchester was worried. He was always worried. It seemed to him that he had been worried for forty-three years, either by his health, which was indifferent, his physique, which was negligible, or his work in the Railway Department of the Runcorn Electric Company, whose big offices stood at the corner of Kingsway. But what worried him most were the bitter and deserved sarcasms of his three sisters, all senior to himself, and the extremely awe-inspiring and vigorous old lady of whom he was so incongruously the son. For Mr. Parchester was the only and inexplicable failure in a brilliant and forceful family, the sole mediocrity among the four children of the late Ernest Parchester, the eminent Queen's Counsel.

That was why he lived, though merely an assistant engineer, in a large house in Manchester Square, where his moderate salary was essential for the preservation of the family dignity, but annoyingly insufficient to a mother and three sisters with memories of arriving broughams and a footman to open the door. For Mrs. Parchester had been the daughter of a distinguished Victorian poet. Darwin and Huxley had partaken of tea with her. Tennyson had read his poetry in her drawing-room. No wonder, therefore, that the drawing-room could not be abandoned, even though Ernest Parchester, dying in mid-career, had left but a few thousands for the support of his family.

But it had been a hard struggle for Mrs. and the Misses Parchester to sustain, even in a modified degree, the residential and social position to which their birth and talents had entitled them. Indeed, it had been necessary for some five or six years to reduce their small capital even further; and it was Mr. Parchester, as they often reminded him, who had been the cause of this perilous expenditure. For he had been

at school when his father died, an expensive school that shed lustre on the family; and subsequently he had been trained, lacking any sort of promise, as an electrical engineer. Altogether he had cost the family, before he was able to support himself, no less than sixteen hundred pounds, a sum that he had never, as they frequently pointed out, put himself into a position to repay.

For, alas, Mr. Parchester, whose only real inclinations had been of a grossly plebeian character—he would have liked to sail before the mast, grow oranges in Florida, or farm a few acres of Canadian prairie—had been as undistinguished an engineer as his sisters had always feared. All that could be said of him, in fact, was that four-fifths of his salary was paid each month into the family exchequer, and that thanks to this contribution, meagre as it was, the family's address was still Manchester Square.

His sisters, on the contrary, handicapped as they were by the many duties of their position, were all of them able to earn enough money to show how easily this could be done. For Emily, the eldest, busy as she was as secretary to the Patmore Club and Sheridan Circle, was an industrious bookbinder who frequently sold her work to would-be purchasers of wedding presents. Alicia, the second, whose sonatas had been played in public, was a half-time almoner at St. Faith's Hospital. And Edith, who had written a monograph on the Italian primitives, contributed occasional art criticism to a feminist monthly. Leaders of thought, therefore, in literature, art, and music were still visitors to Manchester Square, and yet, in spite of this, as his sisters were able to demonstrate to him, each of them earned enough to pay the servants' wages.

Indeed, had they abandoned salon-keeping and Manchester Square and lived at Wimbledon or Barnet, they could doubtless have earned an enormous income in the additional leisure that would have been theirs. Or alternatively they could have devoted themselves entirely to art upon the modest income of the family's capital. But that, as he knew, would have been a social and intellectual degradation that they could never have brought themselves to face. And being a little gentleman, though he sometimes regretted it, Mr. Parchester had never suggested it. For himself, it is true, he would have welcomed such a move. He would then have had a garden in which he could dig, and he would have been able to save enough of his salary to spend his holidays abroad.

Capri, Cartagena, Stockholm, Assisi, such were the magic names on his horizon, and he would sometimes sneak for an hour into an obscure cinema to watch cowboys galloping and shooting brigands. But his obligations to the family's eminence had confined him to an occasional week at Brighton; and remembering that unpaid sixteen hundred pounds, he had stuck to his desk and done his best. That it was a poor best he knew. It had been long ago clear to him that he could never hope for further promotion. But, intolerably as they bored him, he took infinite pains to secure the utmost accuracy in the details before him; and that was why, he supposed, he so often had headaches and was so unable to reply to his sisters' wit. Even during the war he had been unable to do anything distinguished, for his employers had labelled him as indispensable, and the various doctors who had examined him had been wholly unimpressed by his military possibilities.

SO Mr. Parchester was worried. And on this February day he was more worried than he had ever been before, and for a reason, as he well knew, that most people would have thought absurd. For his sisters had arranged that at six o'clock he should propose marriage to a Miss Frances Pond, a wealthy lady who for several months had been a frequent visitor at the house. Moreover, he had been given to understand that Miss Pond, who had been invited to tea, and would probably remain to dinner, was prepared to regard his proposal with a favour wholly beyond his deserts, and especially when it was remembered that she was still in the middle forties and the chairman of at least two boards of directors.

But Mr. Parchester was worried, so deeply worried that he could only comfort himself with the reflection that he had finally checked the long series of estimates—the exhausting work of nearly three months—upon which his company was basing its tender for a new railway in Tasmania. Had he not done so, he doubted if he could have finished the task. In fact, he doubted everything, himself most of all. And that was why he had hesitated outside the bun-shop where he usually ate his lunch. Then quite suddenly, he scarcely knew why, he had taken a deep breath and crossed the road, and entered the dazzling portals of the cosmopolitan restaurant known to the world as Bernard's.

II.

MEANWHILE the two gods, unwitting of Mr. Parchester, were already facing each other across their table, with a vast tray supporting a variety of dishes occupying most of the space between them. To Mr. Parchester, who had ordered some

"Forgive me," he said, "for being so impertinent. But would you be so kind as to wish me luck?"

cold ham and a half pint of lager beer, these dishes suggested the *hors d'œuvres* that so frequently prefaced a restaurant dinner; and he noticed that they contained sardines, olives and anchovies, slices of smoked salmon, and numerous kinds of salad. Then he heard one of the gods, the larger one—a very large god indeed—mention the word *Zakouska* as though this were a meal that reminded him of some other partaken afar off. Indeed, it was the pronouncement of this word, so foreign and bizarre, and yet so largely and casually uttered, that first attracted his attention to the two people who were thus lunching beside him.

Both were obviously wearing the guise of Englishmen; each was scorched to the last depth of bronze; and they had evidently foregathered upon their spacious ways after some everyday but venturous separation. He glanced from one to the other, absorbing and contrasting them, the younger a slight man scarcely heavier than himself, and the elder a colossus with the bluest of commanding eyes, a rebellious mane of hair, and an untidy beard. The younger man was clean-shaven and his gentle brown eyes were oddly belied by the lines about his mouth, clear-cut lines telling their own story of decisions and dangers faced and forgotten. He had just returned, so Mr. Parchester gathered, from some sort of mission on the Indian frontier; and he heard him mention Tibet, a river called the Salween, and a place called Omati.

Then he told a story that evidently amused his comrade, for the latter leaned back and shouted with laughter, and then began himself to talk about the Altai Mountains and a horse that he had found there without a forelock. But by now Mr. Parchester had been staring at them so long, and with so abject and devouring an intensity, that they seemed to become aware of him and glanced at him simultaneously, albeit but for the fraction of a second. Worm, weed, miserable townee, not even a gentleman since he was so obviously eavesdropping—that was how he saw himself in that fractional glance, and, blushing to his ears, he bent over his plate. Then the talk went on again, Olympian and deliberate—something about a wapiti with two bay points—and Mr. Parchester pushed his ham away and tried to remember his duty to his mother and sisters.

But what *was* his duty? He was even beginning to doubt that. For here beside the gods, and infected by their divinity, his former ideas of it seemed to be crumbling away and assuming a new and disturbing shape. For if he were doing his duty, had

been doing it all these years, why should it so perpetually have worried him? And could that be called duty, even to other people, that robbed a man of everything that made him god-like?

He stole a glance once more at his unconscious neighbours, and what he read in them, the hall-mark of their caste, was courage, initiative, joy—they had dared to be themselves, to live their own lives. And that was their gift to others, their supreme gift. They had refused to become crutches, adding to the world's weakness. That was why they were gods, living in heaven. That was why heaven shone from them like a tonic. Mr. Parchester drank it with a beating heart.

"I've never done what I liked," he said "But I will. At least, I think I will. Yes, I must. It's my last chance. It's my only hope."

With faltering knees he rose to his feet and tremblingly addressed himself to the gods.

"Forgive me," he said, "for being so impertinent. But would you be so kind as to wish me luck?"

III.

IT was a crucial moment. It was perhaps the most crucial moment of his whole insignificant career. And for the next two or three seconds, as he stood before the gods, Mr. Parchester felt his fate trembling in the balance. But after a brief pause of amused surprise—a pause, too, of critical and instructed discernment—the younger one said "Certainly," and the bearded one said "Here's luck," and they drank to him with tolerance and even kindness. Whether in fact they had guessed the nature of his crisis Mr. Parchester could not tell. But a couple of minutes later, as he stood on the pavement outside, he felt that he had been admitted for a moment to their fellowship; and though the moment was over, of course, and would never return, its intoxication remained and he meant to be worthy of it.

Moreover, now that he made up his mind and received their blessing, it was astonishing how everything seemed to help him, from the day itself, warm and seductive—the first day of Spring, though he hadn't previously noticed it—to an agreeable young woman, smelling faintly of violets, who accidentally brushed against him and smiled her apologies.

"Yes, I shall take the afternoon off," he said. "After all, there's nothing to do, nothing that can't wait till to-morrow morning," and with this in view he returned to Kingsway and climbed the stairs to the room in which he worked.

This was a small room that he shared with three other assistants, but it was now empty save for an elderly messenger, who was attending to the fire, and who remembered Mr. Parchester when he had first joined the company nineteen years before. Mr. Parchester went to his desk, collected his papers, put them away and locked them up, and then, turning to the messenger, announced his intention of not coming back any more that afternoon.

"You might tell Mr. Pawle," he said. "And if he should want me for anything urgent, he can ring me up at home at six o'clock." Mr. Parchester was a little flushed. It was the most irregular thing he had done since he had entered the office at the age of twenty-four. But he didn't care, and he was a trifle surprised to see how calmly the news was received. Then he put on his hat, lit a cigarette, waved a cheerful good-bye to the messenger, and plunged into the freedom, the south-west sunshine, and exhilaration of the streets.

At first, inspired by lunch and the benediction of the gods, he simply strode along filling his lungs. But instinctively he turned westwards away from safes and offices, and presently bethought him of going to a cinema. But the day was too delirious, the sky too entrancing, and hailing a bus bound for Hampstead Heath, he climbed to a front seat—plenty of room at this hour—and eventually found his feet on the soft turf. As it wouldn't be growing dark for another two and a half hours, he decided to explore the Heath as he had never explored it before, striding across to Highgate, returning to the Spaniard's Inn, and beating the West Heath's bushed and wooded boundaries. Then towards half-past four he found himself at Jack Straw's Castle, and a few minutes later, in a steep and winding street, entered a red-tiled cottage, built in the reign of William IV., and now converted into a tea-house.

"I'm feeling hungry," he thought, but even before he had found a seat—the little parlour was uncomfortably crowded—the shadow of the ordeal that awaited him at six o'clock began to creep over him and rob him of his appetite. For though he had made up his mind that under no pressure whatsoever would he be forced into marrying Miss Pond, he had refused to consider, during the sunny afternoon, the precise steps by which he should avoid this. But now he must decide. In this new country—the country of his freedom—into which he had broken, this was the first obstacle to be overcome, and he felt miserably alone and inexperienced.

He munched his tea-cake, unconscious of his surroundings. Of course, he could simply stay out all night and explain in the morning.

He regarded her at first absently, then with an increasing amount of attention. "Yes," he observed, "now you're much more the sort of girl I should like to marry."

But somehow his conscience rejected this idea, and he had told the messenger that he would be at home at six o'clock—a pure piece of bluff, since never in his career had the department found it necessary to consult him by telephone. Then he visualized Miss Pond with her massive good looks, her capable chin and masterful glance, and that dread-inspiring desire in her to become Mrs. Something, even if it were only Mrs. Parchester. For he had no illusions as to its being anything else. He was merely to be the trinket whereby this might be attained; but whereby also the family in Manchester Square would be freed from further financial stringency. He wiped his forehead. That was why it was going to be such a fight. And he was still shaking a little, in spite of himself, when he was obliged to get up and lift his chair aside to allow a vague person next him to leave her own.

"Well, cheerio!" she said to another vague person opposite, and when Mr. Parchester had resumed his seat, he saw that her companion, who had just lit a cigarette, was still toying with her cup of tea.

He regarded her at first absently, still thinking of Miss Pond, but then with an increasing amount of attention—a composed-faced damsel with candid eyes and a boyish-looking head of dark bobbed hair.

"Yes," he observed, "now you're much more the sort of girl I should like to marry."

Then he realized several things at once—firstly, that he had said what he said aloud; secondly, that it would be considered an unusual speech; but, thirdly, that no sensible person ought to think it rude. He did not apologize, therefore, and after a moment's silence the girl, who had been examining him, began to smile.

"That's very nice of you," she said. "But as I don't know the alternative, it's a little difficult for me to advise."

Their eyes met for a moment, quite a considerable moment.

"I'm a dud," said Mr. Parchester, "and I'm forty-three."

The girl said nothing, at any rate with her lips.

"I mean," said Mr. Parchester, "that my story would probably bore you."

The girl tapped her cigarette-ash into her saucer.

"Well, have a shot," she said, "and I'll say when."

Ten minutes later he looked at his watch.

"Well, that's all," he said, "and now I must go and see it through."

"Oh, it will be quite simple," she said. "Say you're in a hurry to dress, as you've promised to take your best girl to the theatre."

Mr. Parchester stared at her.

"But that wouldn't be true," he said.

"Why not?" she replied. "It doesn't sound impossible."

For a moment he envisaged the position. Now if it had been a pass in the Altai Mountains——

"What's your name?" he asked, suddenly.

"Shirley Brown," she said. "I'm quite respectable. My father's a doctor, and I'm a professional toy-maker."

"Where do you live?" he inquired.

"Just round the corner," she said. "And I've got rather a nice frock that I haven't worn yet."

Shadowy above her shoulders, Mr. Parchester saw the gods smiling at him.

"Then we'll dine at Battista's," he said, "at half-past seven."

IV.

IT was five minutes past six when Mr. Parchester arrived at Manchester Square, but though he was late, he could see that an order had gone forth for special consideration to be shown him. This was obvious even in the attitude of the prim parlourmaid who opened the door, an angular and hawk-like custodian, who had been his sisters' confidante for twenty years.

"Miss Emily and Miss Pond's in the drawing-room," she said, "and Mrs. Parchester and Miss Edith's in the study."

Mr. Parchester nodded. His pulse must be something terrific, he thought. But he tried to look nonchalant as he took off his coat and hat. On the way upstairs he met Alicia.

"You're a bit late," she said, "aren't you?"

His mouth felt very dry, but he moistened his lips.

"Yes. I've been to Hampstead," he said. "I took the afternoon off."

The quarter of a smile on her lips flickered out.

"Took the afternoon off!" she said. "Why?"

"Oh, because I felt like it," he said; "and I shall be out for dinner. I'm taking a girl to the theatre."

He spoke as casually as he could and tried to go on upstairs. But his sister gripped him and swung him towards her.

"What do you mean?" she said. "What are you talking about?"

He moistened his lips again. But no word came from them. On the landing above he heard the drawing-room door open and Emily's clear voice saying, "Is that Herbert?"

Alicia glanced up.

"Yes, he's just coming," she said, adding, in a low voice, "Have you no sense of decency?"

And it was just then that the grim parlourmaid announced that he was wanted on the telephone.

"Excuse me," he said, but Alicia still held his arm.

"Who wants you?" she asked. "Is this some sort of game?"

"I don't know," he replied. "You'd better let me go and see."

Under the eyes of the parlourmaid she released his arm.

When he lifted the receiver, he heard the head of his department, an extremely adequate man of his own age.

"Pawle speaking," he said. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I was feeling fed-up," said Mr. Parchester, "so I took the afternoon off."

"Well, we wanted you," said Mr. Pawle, "in connection with those estimates for Tasmania."

"Very sorry," said Mr. Parchester. "What about them?"

"There were one or two things that Sir Eric didn't understand, and he's going up north early to-morrow morning."

Mr. Parchester paled a little. Sir Eric was the distinguished engineer who was to be the company's ambassador to Tasmania—a bull-shouldered, bluff-faced North-countryman, who had been knighted for his war work in the Ministry of Munitions. There was a moment's pause and Mr. Pawle spoke again.

"Could you arrange," he said, "to see him to-night?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Parchester, "I'm taking a girl to the theatre and dining at Battista's at half-past seven."

There was another pause, and then, in a curious tone, Mr. Pawle said that Sir Eric would speak to him. A new and robuster voice filled the receiver.

"Good evening," it said. "I don't want to spoil sport. But could you spare me half an hour?"

"At what time?" said Mr. Parchester.

"Say at a quarter to seven, at the Quarendon Club in St. James's Street."

"Right you are," said Mr. Parchester. "I'll be there."

"Well, that's that," he thought. "I suppose I'm in for it."

Then he went upstairs again. Alicia had disappeared. But he found her in the drawing-room, turning over some papers. Emily and Miss Pond were sitting by the fire. He crossed the room and bade them good evening.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "not to be able to stay. But I have to meet Sir Eric Holt in half an hour. And after that I've promised to go to the theatre. I'm afraid, if you'll forgive me, I must go and dress."

The fire was a good one. But the room felt like an ice-house. He saw two pink spots on Miss Pond's cheeks.

"Oh, please don't stop," she said. Nobody else said anything, though what they would say presently needed no guessing.

SO Mr. Parchester bowed and fled from the room, but twenty minutes later, as he sat in a taxi, he felt curiously elated and even self-confident, and with his brain clearer than he ever remembered it. For now that the battle was joined not only with his own family but also apparently with the Runcorn Electric Company, the gods, as it seemed to him, fresh from their large horizons, were lounging beside him thoroughly at ease. And for them, at any rate, neither Mr. Pawle nor Sir Eric Holt could hold any terrors. After all they were merely men. Both of them had been in knickerbockers at the same time as himself, and even Lord Runcorn, the chairman of the company, was a fellow-specimen of the human family. Even when he found himself confronted by all three of them in a quiet corner of the Quarendon smoking-room, Mr. Parchester felt amazingly serene, and shook hands with them without a tremor. Indeed, he liked the look of Sir Eric, and even Lord Runcorn, whom he had only seen at a distance, seemed less formidable close at hand, an ordinary old gentleman, polite and puckered.

"I'm sorry to have bothered you," said Sir Eric. "Pull up that chair. But I'm told you know this stuff from A to Z."

Well, so he did. Mr. Parchester smiled. That was what he had waded to through infinite boredom. But now, as he leaned back, marshalling those myriad details, he could almost have forgiven them what they had cost him. For in answer to Sir Eric's rapped-out questions they trooped so willingly to his mind that they even became interesting, and he expressed an idea or two that had occurred to him while he was mastering them.

Once Mr. Pawle interrupted him.

"Why didn't you put that up before?" he asked. His expression was amused and a little perplexed. Mr. Parchester glanced at him.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "I supposed it was rather out of my beat."

Then Lord Runcorn, who had hitherto remained silent, put a brief query to him which he answered, and Mr. Parchester, seeing it was twenty minutes past seven, rose to his feet and prepared to go.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, "but I mustn't be late."

Sir Eric grinned at Lord Runcorn.

"Quite right," he said. "Never keep a woman waiting. It's one of the first principles of life."

Nevertheless he was a few minutes late, having delayed on his way to Battista's to buy a couple of stalls at the Empress Theatre for "The Best Girl of All." But when he met Shirley she showed no signs of resentment, and indeed they greeted one another, as it seemed to him, like fellow-campaigners met for a brief respite after the first round of an engagement.

"Well, how goes it?" she said, but after listening intently she merely nodded without remark, and told him that his next task was to get on with his dinner, which, in her opinion, was proving an excellent one.

"Best I've ever had," said Mr. Parchester. "What do you suppose has happened to me?"

Shirley gazed at him for a moment very wisely.

"Well, I'll tell you one of the things," she said, smiling. "You've stopped being Herbert and become Bertie."

Then they drove to the theatre, and at the end of the first act Shirley told him to go out and smoke, and it was while he was doing so, a little reluctantly, that a genial hand fell upon his shoulder. It belonged to Sir Eric, immaculate in evening dress.

"You'll be thinking I'm haunting you," he said. "But I just happened to blow in. And since you left me I've been worrying about something else. You see, somehow or other, these estimates have got to be cut. Now, what about those rail prices quoted by Smerdons?"

They were joined by Mr. Pawle, who had accompanied Sir Eric to the theatre, and were still talking five minutes after the curtain had gone up.

"Never mind," said Sir Eric. "It's a rotten show. Oh, I forgot. You've got a lady with you."

Creeping to his seat, Mr. Parchester apologized to Shirley and explained in a whisper what had detained him.

"That's all right," she breathed. "I believe we're getting reinforcements. One always does, you know, in a good cause."

How strong they were to be, however, neither of them guessed till Mr. Pawle beckoned to him at the end of the second act.

"Look here," he said. "Sir Eric wants to take you to Tasmania with him. Can you be ready to sail on Saturday week?"

It was not until a quarter to one that Mr. Parchester returned.

V.

IT was not until a quarter to one that Mr. Parchester—at least he supposed it was Mr. Parchester—returned to Manchester Square. But his mother and sisters, even as he had foreseen, were still fully dressed and awaiting him in the drawing-room. It was his mother's voice that summoned him to enter. He sauntered in and stood looking at them. So these were the people, he thought, before whom he had always quailed—these four tethered and unhappy despots.

"Well," said his mother, "and what's the explanation of this?"

But what *was* it? He was blest if he knew. He was only conscious in them of

"Well," said his mother, "and what's the explanation of this?"

a pathetic futility, for which he himself, perhaps, had been partly responsible.

"Yes," said Emily, "we should like to hear, please."

Alicia and Edith merely sat looking at him. And yet he could see that something was creeping over them—the shadow of some irreparable disaster.

He lit a cigarette.

"I'm afraid it's a bit sudden," he said. "But I'm going to Tasmania on behalf of the company. I shall probably be away for about six months, and when I come back I'm hoping to get married."

For perhaps twelve seconds there was the silence of death. Then Emily spoke to him rather huskily.

"Whom are you proposing to marry?" she asked.

"Name of Brown," he said. "Nobody important, and she hasn't any money."

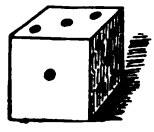
318

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

715.—TURNING THE DIE.

HERE is a little puzzle game that has interested me a good deal lately. It is played with a single die. The first player calls any number he chooses, from 1 to 6, and the second player throws the die at hazard. Then they take it in turns to roll over the die in any direction they choose, but never giving it more than a quarter turn. The score increases as they proceed and the player wins who manages to score 25 or force his opponent to score beyond 25. I will give an example game. A calls 6, and B happens to throw a 3 (as shown in our illustration), making the score 9. Now A decides to turn up 1, scoring 10; B turns up 3, scoring 13; A turns up 6, scoring 19; B turns up 3, scoring 22; A turns up 1, scoring 23; and B turns up 2, scoring 25 and winning.



What call should A make in order to have the best chance of winning? Remember that the numbers on opposite sides of a correct die always sum to 7, that is, 1—6, 2—5, 3—4.

716.—DIGITS AND PRIMES.

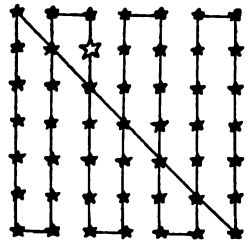
USING the nine digits once and once only, can you find prime numbers (numbers that cannot be divided, without remainder, by any number except 1 and itself) that will add up to the smallest total possible? Here is an example. The four prime numbers contain all the nine digits once and once only, and add up to 450, but this total can be considerably reduced. It is quite an easy puzzle.

61
283
47
59

450

717.—STRIKING OUT STARS.

PUT your pencil on the white star and strike out all the stars in the fewest possible continuous straight strokes, ending at the place of starting. I show one way



of doing it in fifteen strokes, but these are too many. You may go in any direction you like, but every turning must be made on a star.

718.—A CHARADE.

TWO personal pronouns if you take
And join them in due order,
An herb will name, without mistake.
That scents the garden border.

719.—THE ADINCO PUZZLE.

"AD" was the word the master gave to Dick,
Who scratched his head and, looking rather thick
Replied, "Hereafter it would make it stick!"
"You may stay IN an hour, you stupid dunce,"
The teacher said: "define an IN at once."
"I think," said Dick, with eyes upon the floor,
"Hereafter it would make it stick the more."
"Your back with that same stick I'll put in CO,"
The teacher said, "unless this word you know!"
"CO!" said Dick. "To me it seems, kind master,
Hereafter it will stick the faster!"

720.—PAYING THE TOLL.

THIS is an old puzzle, the intended answer to which I have never seen. What can you make of it?

A man had to cross a bridge where the toll was one penny. He hadn't a penny about him, nor any silver, gold, or note, nor anything of the value of a penny that he could dispense with; and he neither earned, begged, borrowed, stole, found, nor acquired a penny in any way whatever. Yet he paid the toll in coin of the realm. How did he manage it?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

712.—AN AMUSING CHESS PUZZLE.

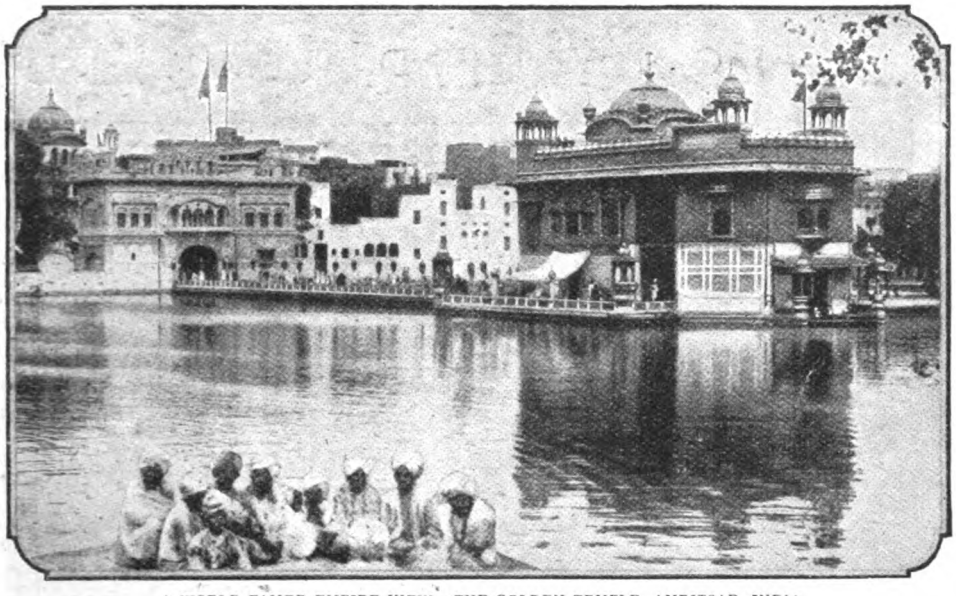
PLAY 1. R takes Kt, ch., 1. R takes R; 2. R to B 2, ch., 2. K takes R, checkmate. Black is thus forced by White to checkmate him and the game is over! So a black pawn can never be queened.

713.—NEW WORD CHAIN.

WAS, ASA, SAD, ADA, DAB, ABE, BEN, ENA, NAG, AGA, GAS, ASP, SPA, PAH, AHA, HAS, ASH, SHE, HER, ERA, RAP, APE, PEG, EGO, GOD, ODE, DEY, EYE, YEA, EAT, ATE, TEA, EAR, ARE, REE, E'EN, ENO, NOW, OWE, WED, EDE, DEN, END. Forty-three words. Asa: old name of a gum. Ena: Christian name of Queen of Spain. Aga: a Turkish functionary. Dey: a Turkish title. Ree: Portuguese money. Ede: contraction of Edith. Curious coincidence: "as it WAS *in the beginning* . . . world without END."

714.—EQUAL PERIMETERS.

THE six right-angled triangles having each the same, and the smallest possible, perimeter, 840, are the following: 105, 360, 375; 140, 336, 364; 168, 315, 357; 210, 280, 350; 240, 252, 348; 120, 350, 370.



A WORLD-FAMED EMPIRE VIEW—THE GOLDEN TEMPLE, AMRITSAR, INDIA.

The Empire's Golden Rule of Health

IF you should make a tour of our great Empire, visiting the family of Britons in their homes all over the world, and if you should look beyond those big differences of habit and thought and tradition, seeking to perceive the little common ties—something they do "the same as we do it at home"—you would find this: that the time-honoured custom of drinking a glass of ENO first thing every morning prevails in every land.

The 'dash of ENO' has become a household phrase throughout the world; the 'dash' of ENO is by every test the accepted rule of good health wherever Britons go.

Remember this of ENO: that in its journeyings throughout the world it is invariably the same product. There is not one kind of ENO for the East and another for the West; ENO is ENO the world over—impervious to climate, made always by the same process, composed always of the same ingredients.

Remember this, too, of ENO: that to be sure of the benefits that ENO gives, you must always ask for ENO and see that you get it.

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT"

TRADE MARK

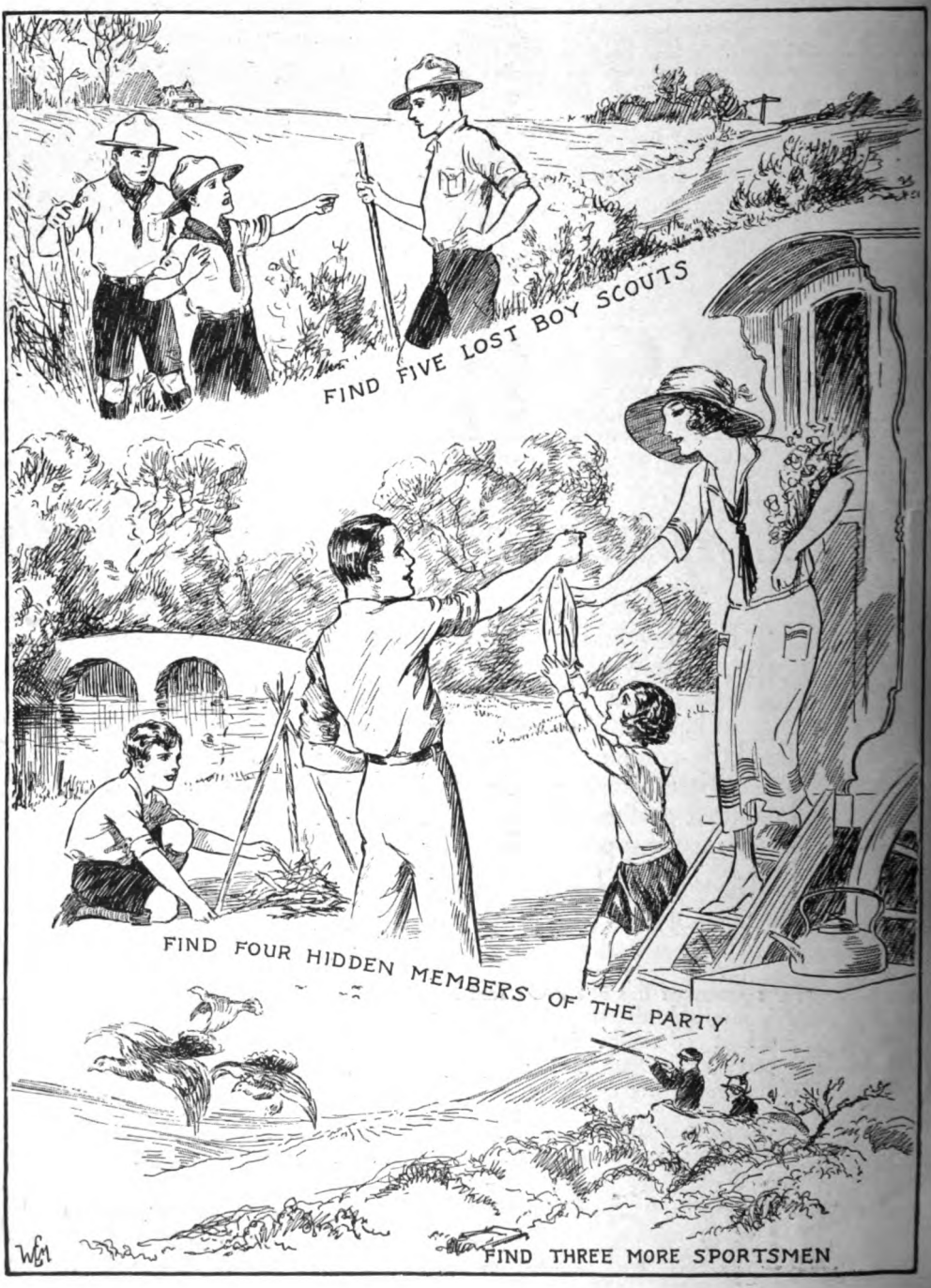
The World-Famed Effervescent Saline

Visitors to the British Empire Exhibition are cordially invited to call at the ENO Kiosk, No. 1, King's Way West

To face end of Text.

ENOCH PRATT
BALTO.
FREE LIBRARY

CAN YOU FIND THEM ?



W JEEVES
ORY By P.G.WODEHOUSE

OCT 6 1924

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

THE "Q.Q." GREAT NEW DETECTIVE
solves another mystery in
"THE FOURTH DEGREE"

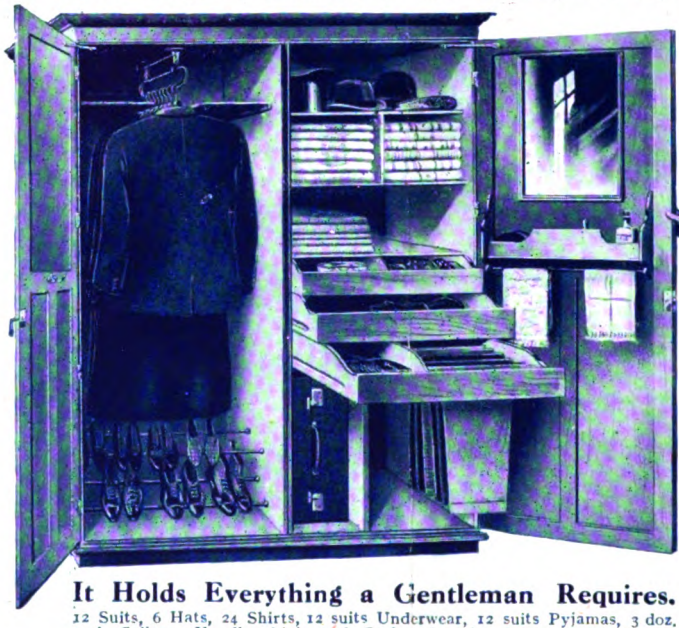
The AWLYN

ALL IN PLACE, VIEW & REACH

Keeps Your Outfit Fit.

A Place for Everything, Everything in its Place.

This wardrobe is a splendid example of the cabinet-maker's art. The drawers and hangers slide at a touch. Any article can be obtained instantly and replaced in a moment.



What Shall I Wear To-day?

It Holds Everything a Gentleman Requires.

12 Suits, 6 Hats, 24 Shirts, 12 suits Underwear, 12 suits Pyjamas, 3 doz. each Collars, Handkerchiefs and Socks, 8 pairs Boots, Suitcase, etc.

THE AWLYN GENT.'S WARDROBE.

Perfectly constructed in OAK. Light, Dark, Fumed, or Antique Finish. Height, 6ft. 5ins.; width, 4ft. 6ins.; depth, 1ft. 10ins. - - - - **22 gns.**

Also supplied in Rich Mahogany, **26 gns.**

THE AWLYN JUNIOR (a smaller size)

Height, 6ft.; width, 3ft. 6ins.; depth, 1ft. 8ins. In OAK. Light, Dark, Fumed, or Antique - - - - - **16 gns.**

Or in Mahogany, **19 gns.**

SENT CARRIAGE PAID HOME. WRITE TO DESK "S" FOR PARTICULARS.

"The MARSTON" BUREAU

£5.12.6

CARRIAGE PAID HOME.

A perfect reproduction from a choice example of the wonderful craftsmanship of the Jacobean period. 2ft. 6ins. wide, made from fine-grain solid Oak. Fall Front, with automatic slides, full fitted desk, two long drawers below, antique fittings.

Write Desk "S" for Catalogue.

DOWNINGS

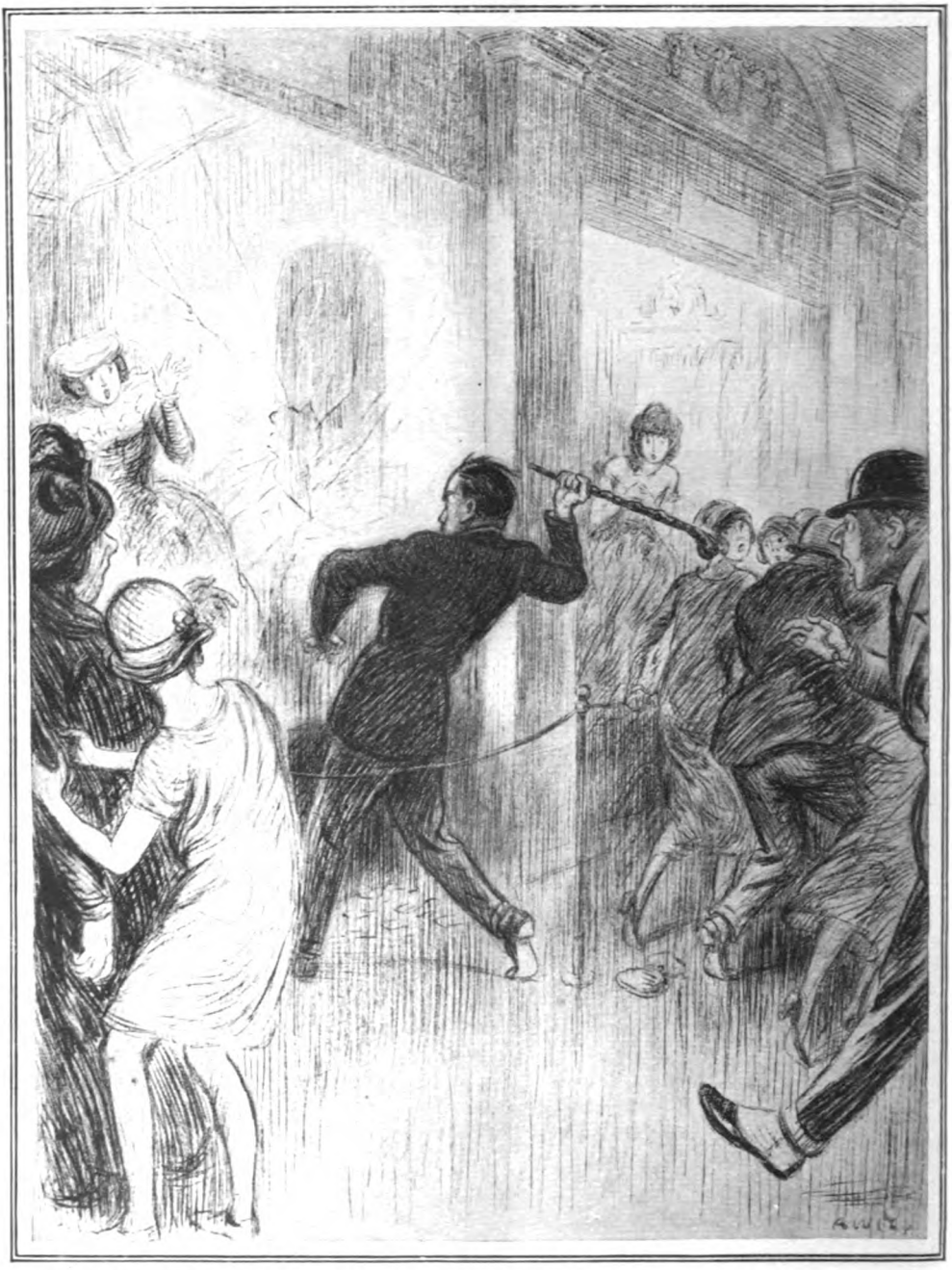
THE CASH HOUSE

61, 62, 49, 50, 51, & 36, LONDON RD., ELEPHANT & CASTLE, LONDON, S.E.1

(Facing Bakerloo Tube Station.)

'Phone: Central 7077

THE
STRAND
MAGAZINE
October, 1924.



BIFFY'S FIRST SLOSH SMASHED THE GLASS ALL TO HASH. THREE MORE CLEARED THE WAY FOR HIM TO GO INTO THE CAGE WITHOUT CUTTING HIMSELF.

(See page 332.)

The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

"JEEVES," I said, emerging from the old tub, "rally round."

"Yes, sir."

I beamed on the man with no little geniality. I was putting in a week or two in Paris at the moment, and there's something about Paris that always makes me feel fairly full of *espièglerie* and *joie de vivre*.

"Lay out our gent's medium-smart raiment, suitable for Bohemian revels," I said. "I am lunching with an artist bloke on the other side of the river."

"Very good, sir."

"And if anybody calls for me, Jeeves, say that I shall be back towards the quiet even-fall."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Biffen rang up on the telephone while you were in your bath."

"Mr. Biffen? Good heavens!"

Amazing how one's always running across fellows in foreign cities—birds, I mean, whom you haven't seen for ages and would have betted weren't anywhere in the neighbourhood. Paris was the last place where I should have expected to find old Biffy popping up. There was a time when he and I had been lads about town together, lunching and dining together practically every day; but some eighteen months back his old godmother had died and left him that place in Herefordshire, and he had retired there to wear gaiters and prod cows in the ribs and generally be the country gentleman and landed proprietor. Since then I had hardly seen him.

"Old Biffy in Paris? What's he doing here?"

"He did not confide in me, sir," said Jeeves—a trifle frostily, I thought. It sounded somehow as if he didn't like Biffy. And yet they had always been matey enough in the old days.

"Where's he staying?"

"At the Hotel Avenida, Rue du Colisée, sir. He informed me that he was about to take a walk and would call this afternoon."

"Well, if he comes when I'm out, tell him to wait. And now, Jeeves, mes gants, mon chapeau, et le whangee de monsieur. I must be popping."

It was such a corking day and I had so much time in hand that near the Sorbonne I stopped my cab, deciding to walk the rest of the way. And I had hardly gone three steps and a half when there on the pavement before me stood old Biffy in person. If I had completed the last step I should have rammed him.

"Biffy!" I cried. "Well, well, well!"

He peered at me in a blinking kind of way, rather like one of his Herefordshire cows prodded unexpectedly while lunching.

"Bertie!" he gurgled, in a devout sort of tone. "Thank God!" He clutched my arm. "Don't leave me, Bertie. I'm lost."

"What do you mean, lost?"

"I came out for a walk and suddenly discovered after a mile or two that I didn't know where on earth I was. I've been wandering round in circles for hours."

"Why didn't you ask the way?"

"I can't speak a word of French."

"Well, why didn't you call a taxi?"

"I suddenly discovered I'd left all my money at my hotel."

"You could have taken a cab and paid it when you got to the hotel."

"Yes, but suddenly I discovered, dash it, that I'd forgotten its name."

And there in a nutshell you have Charles Edward Biffen. As vague and woollen-headed a blighter as ever bit a sandwich. Goodness knows—and my Aunt Agatha will bear me out in this—I'm no master-mind myself; but compared with Biffy I'm one of the great thinkers of all time.

Copyright, 1924, by P. G. Wodehouse.

"I'd give a shilling," said Biffy, wistfully, "to know the name of that hotel."

"You can owe it me. Hotel Avenida, Rue du Colisée."

"Bertie! This is uncanny. How the deuce did you know?"

"That was the address you left with Jeeves this morning."

"So it was. I had forgotten."

"Well, come along and have a drink, and then I'll put you in a cab and send you home. I'm engaged for lunch, but I've plenty of time."

We drifted to one of the eleven *cafés* which jostled each other along the street and I ordered restoratives.

"What on earth are you doing in Paris?" I asked.

"Bertie, old man," said Biffy, solemnly, "I came here to try and forget."

"Well, you've certainly succeeded."

"You don't understand. The fact is, Bertie, old lad, my heart is broken. I'll tell you the whole story."

"No, I say!" I protested. But he was off.

"Last year," said Biffy, "I buzzed over to Canada to do a bit of salmon fishing."

I ordered another. If this was going to be a fish-story, I needed stimulants.

"On the liner going to New York I met a girl." Biffy made a sort of curious gulping noise not unlike a bulldog trying to swallow half a cutlet in a hurry so as to be ready for the other half. "Bertie, old man, I can't describe her. I simply can't describe her."

THIS was all to the good.

"She was wonderful! We used to walk on the boat-deck after dinner. She was on the stage. At least, sort of."

"How do you mean, sort of?"

"Well, she had worked with a concert party and posed for artists and been a mannequin in a big dressmaker's and all that sort of thing, don't you know," said Biffy, vaguely. "Anyway, she had saved up a few pounds and was on her way to see if she could get a job in New York. She told me all about herself. Her father ran a milk-walk in Clapham. Or it may have been Cricklewood. At least, it was either a milk-walk or a boot-shop."

"Easily confused."

"What I'm trying to make you understand," said Biffy, "is that she came of good, sturdy, respectable middle-class stock. Nothing flashy about her. The sort of wife any man might have been proud of."

"Well, whose wife was she?"

"Nobody's. That's the whole point of the story. I wanted her to be mine, and I lost her."

"Had a quarrel, you mean?"

"No, I don't mean we had a quarrel. I mean I literally lost her. The last I ever saw of her was in the Customs sheds at New York. We were behind a pile of trunks, and I had just asked her to be my wife, and she had just said she would and everything was perfectly splendid, when a most offensive blighter in a peaked cap came up to talk about some cigarettes which he had found at the bottom of my trunk and which I had forgotten to declare. It was getting pretty late by then, for we hadn't docked till about ten-thirty, so I told Mabel to go on to her hotel and I would come round next day and take her to lunch. And since then I haven't set eyes on her."

"You mean she wasn't at the hotel?"

"Probably she was. But——"

"You don't mean you never turned up?"

"Bertie, old man," said Biffy, in an overwrought kind of way, "for Heaven's sake don't keep trying to tell me what I mean and what I don't mean! Let me tell this my own way, or I shall get all mixed up and have to go back to the beginning."

"Tell it your own way," I said, hastily.

"Well, then, to put it in a word, Bertie, I forgot the name of the hotel. By the time I'd done half an hour's heavy explaining about those cigarettes my mind was a blank. I had an idea I had written the name down somewhere, but I couldn't have done, for it wasn't on any of the papers in my pocket. No, it was no good. She was gone."

"Why didn't you make inquiries?"

"Well, the fact is, Bertie, I had forgotten her name."

"Oh, no, dash it!" I said. This seemed a bit too thick even for Biffy. "How could you forget her name? Besides, you told it me a moment ago. Muriel or something."

"Mabel," corrected Biffy, coldly. "It was her surname I'd forgotten. So I gave it up and went to Canada."

"But half a second," I said. "You must have told her your name. I mean, if you couldn't trace her, she could trace you."

"Exactly. That's what makes it all seem so infernally hopeless. She knows my name and where I live and everything, but I haven't heard a word from her. I suppose, when I didn't turn up at the hotel, she took it that that was my way of hinting delicately that I had changed my mind and wanted to call the thing off."

"I suppose so," I said. There didn't seem anything else to suppose. "Well, the only thing to do is to whizz around and try to heal the wound, what? How about dinner to-night, winding up at the Abbaye, or one of those places?"

Biffy shook his head.

"It wouldn't be any good. I've tried it. Besides, I'm leaving on the four o'clock train. I have a dinner engagement to-morrow with a man who's nibbling at that house of mine in Herefordshire."

"Oh, are you trying to sell that place? I thought you liked it."

"I did. But the idea of going on living in that great, lonely barn of a house after what has happened appals me, Bertie. So when Sir Roderick Glossop came along——"

"Sir Roderick Glossop! You don't mean the loony-doctor?"

"The great nerve specialist, yes. Why, do you know him?"

It was a warm day, but I shivered.

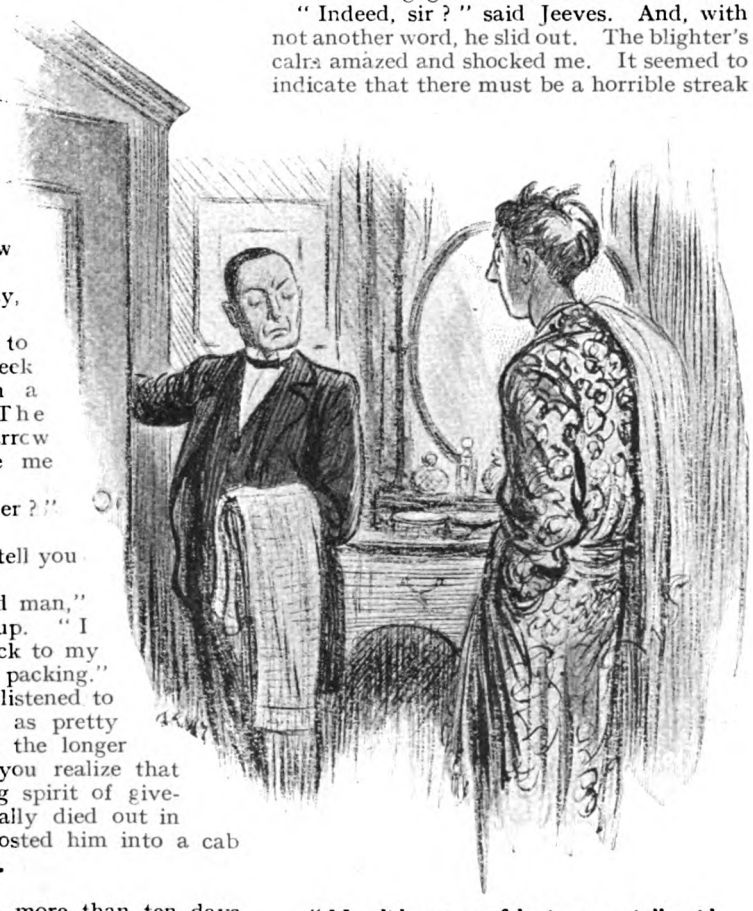
"I was engaged to his daughter for a week or two," I said, in a hushed voice. The memory of that narrow squeak always made me feel faint.

"Has he a daughter?" said Biffy, absently.

"He has. Let me tell you all about——"

"Not just now, old man," said Biffy, getting up. "I ought to be going back to my hotel to see about my packing."

Which, after I had listened to his story, struck me as pretty low-down. However, the longer you live, the more you realize that the good old sporting spirit of give-and-take has practically died out in our midst. So I boosted him into a cab and went off to lunch.



"He did not confide in me, sir," said Jeeves—a trifle frostily, I thought.

IT can't have been more than ten days after this that I received a nasty shock while getting outside my morning tea and toast. The English papers had arrived, and Jeeves was just drifting out of the room after depositing *The Times* by my bedside, when, as I idly turned the pages in search of the sporting section, a paragraph leaped out and hit me squarely in the eyeball.

As follows:—

FORTHCOMING MARRIAGES.

MR. C. E. BIFFEN AND MISS GLOSSOP.

The engagement is announced between Charles Edward, only son of the late Mr. E. C. Biffen, and Mrs. Biffen, of 11, *Penslow Square, Mayfair, and Honoria Jane Louise, only daughter of Sir Roderick and Lady Glossop, of* 6b, *Harley Street, W.*

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed.

"Sir?" said Jeeves, turning at the door.

"Jeeves, you remember Miss Glossop?"

"Very vividly, sir."

"She's engaged to Mr. Biffen!"

"Indeed, sir?" said Jeeves. And, with not another word, he slid out. The blighter's calm amazed and shocked me. It seemed to indicate that there must be a horrible streak of callousness in him. I mean to say, it wasn't as if he didn't know Honoria Glossop.

I read the paragraph again. A peculiar feeling it gave me. I don't know if you have ever experienced the sensation of seeing the announcement of the engagement of a pal of yours to a girl whom you were only saved from marrying yourself by the skin of your teeth. It induces a sort of—well, it's difficult to describe it exactly; but I should imagine a fellow would feel much the same if he

happened to be strolling through the jungle with a boyhood chum and met a tigress or a jaguar, or what not, and managed to shin up a tree, and looked down and saw the friend of his youth vanishing into the undergrowth in the animal's slavering jaws. A sort of profound, prayerful relief, if you know what I mean, blended at the same time with a pang of pity. What I'm driving at is that, thankful as I was that I hadn't had to marry Honoria myself, I was sorry to see a real good chap like old Biffy copping it. I sucked down a spot of tea and began to brood over the business.

Of course, there are probably fellows in the world—tough, hardy blokes with strong chins and glittering eyes—who could get engaged to this Glossop menace and like it; but I knew perfectly well that Biffy was not one of them. Honoria, you see, is one of those robust, dynamic girls with the muscles of a welter-weight and a laugh like a squadron of cavalry charging over a tin bridge. A beastly thing to have to face over the breakfast table. Brainy, moreover. The sort of girl who reduces you to pulp with sixteen sets of tennis and a few rounds of golf and then comes down to dinner as fresh as a daisy, expecting you to take an intelligent interest in Freud. If I had been engaged to her another week, her old father would have had one more patient on his books; and Biffy is much the same quiet sort of peaceful, inoffensive bird as me. I was shocked, I tell you, shocked.

And, as I was saying, the thing that shocked me most was Jeeves's frightful lack of proper emotion. The man happening to trickle in at this juncture, I gave him one more chance to show some human sympathy.

"You got the name correctly, didn't you, Jeeves?" I said. "Mr. Biffen is going to marry Honoria Glossop, the daughter of the old boy with the egg-like head and the eyebrows."

"Yes, sir. Which suit would you wish me to lay out this morning?"

And this, mark you, from the man who, when I was engaged to the Glossop, strained every fibre in his brain to extricate me. It beat me. I couldn't understand it.

"The blue with the red twill," I said, coldly. My manner was marked, and I meant him to see that he had disappointed me sorely.

ABOUT a week later I went back to London, and scarcely had I got settled in the old flat when Biffy blew in. One glance was enough to tell me that the poisoned wound had begun to fester. The man did not look bright. No, there was no getting away from it, not bright. He had that kind of stunned, glassy expression which I used to see on my own face in the shaving-mirror during my brief engagement to the Glossop pestilence. However, if you don't want to be one of the What Is Wrong With This Picture brigade, you must observe the conventions, so I shook his hand as warmly as I could.

"Well, well, old man," I said. "Congratulations."

"Thanks," said Biffy, wanly, and there was rather a weighty silence.

"Bertie," said Biffy, after the silence had lasted about three minutes.

"Hullo?"

"Is it really true . . . ?"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing," said Biffy, and conversation languished again. After about a minute and a half he came to the surface once more.

"Bertie."

"Still here, old thing. What is it?"

"I say, Bertie, is it really true that you were once engaged to Honoria?"

"It is."

Biffy coughed.

"How did you get out—I mean, what was the nature of the tragedy that prevented the marriage?"

"Jeeves worked it. He thought out the entire scheme."

"I think, before I go," said Biffy, thoughtfully, "I'll just step into the kitchen and have a word with Jeeves."

I felt that the situation called for complete candour.

"Biffy, old egg," I said, "as man to man, do you want to oil out of this thing?"

"Bertie, old cork," said Biffy, earnestly, "as one friend to another, I do."

"Then why the dickens did you ever get into it?"

"I don't know. Why did you?"

"I—well, it sort of happened."

"And it sort of happened with me. You know how it is when your heart's broken. A kind of lethargy comes over you. You get absent-minded and cease to exercise proper precautions, and the first thing you know you're for it. I don't know how it happened, old man, but there it is. And what I want you to tell me is, what's the procedure?"

"You mean, how does a fellow edge out?"

"Exactly. I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, Bertie, but I can't go through with this thing. The shot is not on the board. For about a day and a half I thought it might be all right, but now—— You remember that laugh of hers?"

"I do."

"Well, there's that, and then all this

business of never letting a fellow alone—improving his mind and so forth——"

"I know. I know."

"Very well, then. What do you recommend? What did you mean when you said that Jeeves worked a scheme?"

"Well, you see, old Sir Roderick, who's a loony-doctor and nothing but a loony-doctor, however much you may call him a nerve specialist, discovered that there was a modicum of insanity in my family. Nothing serious. Just one of my uncles. Used to keep rabbits in his bedroom. And the old boy came to lunch here to give me the once-over, and Jeeves arranged matters so that he went away firmly convinced that I was off my onion."

"Well, well, old man," I said. "Congratulations."
"Thanks," said Biffy, wanly, and there was rather a weighty silence.

"I see," said Biffy, thoughtfully. "The trouble is there isn't any insanity in my family."

"None?"

It seemed to me almost incredible that a fellow could be such a perfect chump as dear old Biffy without a bit of assistance.

"Not a loony on the list," he said, gloomily. "It's just like my luck. The old boy's coming to lunch with me to-morrow, no doubt to test me as he did you. And I never felt saner in my life."

I thought for a moment. The idea of meeting Sir Roderick again gave me a cold shivery feeling; but when there is a chance of helping a pal we Woosters have no thought of self.

"Look here, Biffy," I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll roll up for that lunch. It may easily happen that when he finds you are a pal of mine he will forbid the banns right away and no more questions asked."

"Something in that," said Biffy, brightening. "Awfully sporting of you, Bertie."

"Oh, not at all," I said. "And meanwhile I'll consult Jeeves. Put the whole thing up to him and ask his advice. He's never failed me yet. All brain, that chap. His head sticks out at the back and he feeds entirely on fish."

Biffy pushed off, a good deal braced, and I went into the kitchen.

"Jeeves," I said, "I want your help once more. I've just been having a painful interview with Mr. Biffen."

"Indeed, sir?"

"It's like this," I said, and told him the whole thing.

It was rummy, but I could feel him freezing from the start. As a rule, when I call Jeeves into conference on one of these little problems, he's all sympathy and bright ideas; but not to-day.

"I fear, sir," he said, when I had finished, "it is hardly my place to intervene in a private matter affecting——"

"Oh, come!"

"No, sir. It would be taking a liberty."

"Jeeves," I said, tackling the blighter squarely, "what have you got against old Biffy?"

"I, sir?"

"Yes, you."

"I assure you, sir!"

"Oh, well, if you don't want to chip in and save a fellow-creature, I suppose I can't make you. But let me tell you this. I am now going back to the sitting-room, and I am going to put in some very tense thinking. You'll look pretty silly when I come and tell you that I've got Mr. Biffen out of the soup without your assistance. Extremely silly you'll look."

"Yes, sir. Shall I bring you a whisky-and-soda, sir?"

"No. Coffee! Strong and black. And if anybody wants to see me, tell 'em that I'm busy and can't be disturbed."

An hour later I rang the bell.

"Jeeves," I said with hauteur.

"Yes, sir?"

"Kindly ring Mr. Biffen up on the 'phone and say that Mr. Wooster presents his compliments and that he has got it."

I WAS feeling more than a little pleased with myself next morning as I strolled round to Biffy's. As a rule the bright ideas you get overnight have a trick of not seeming quite so frightfully fruity when you examine them by the light of day; but this one looked as good at breakfast as it had done before dinner. I examined it narrowly from every angle, and I didn't see how it could fail.

A few days before, my Aunt Emily's son Harold had celebrated his sixth birthday; and, being up against the necessity of weighing in with a present of some kind, I had happened to see in a shop in the Strand a rather sprightly little gadget, well calculated in my opinion to amuse the child and endear him to one and all. It was a bunch of flowers in a sort of holder ending in an ingenious bulb attachment which, when pressed, shot about a pint and a half of pure spring water into the face of anyone who was ass enough to sniff at it. It seemed to me just the thing to please the growing mind of a kid of six, and I had rolled round with it.

But when I got to the house I found Harold sitting in the midst of a mass of gifts so luxurious and costly that I simply hadn't the crust to contribute a thing that had set me back a mere elevenpence-ha'penny; so with rare presence of mind—for we Woosters can think quick on occasion—I wrenched my Uncle James's card off a toy aeroplane, substituted my own, and trousered the squirt, which I took away with me. It had been lying around in my flat ever since, and it seemed to me that the time had come to send it into action.

"Well?" said Biffy, anxiously, as I curveted into his sitting-room.

The poor old bird was looking pretty green about the gills. I recognized the symptoms. I had felt much the same myself when waiting for Sir Roderick to turn up and lunch with me. How the deuce people who have anything wrong with their nerves can bring themselves to chat with that man, I can't imagine; and yet he has the largest practice in London. Scarcely a day passes without his having to sit on somebody's head and ring for the attendant to bring the strait-waistcoat: and his outlook on life has become so jaundiced through constant association with coves who are picking straws out of their hair that I was convinced that Biffy had merely got to press the bulb and nature would do the rest.

So I patted him on the shoulder and said: "It's all right, old man!"

"What does Jeeves suggest?" asked Biffy, eagerly.

"Jeeves doesn't suggest anything."

"But you said it was all right."

"Jeeves isn't the only thinker in the Wooster home, my lad. I have taken over your little problem, and I can tell you at once that I have the situation well in hand."

"You?" said Biffy.

His tone was far from flattering. It suggested a lack of faith in my abilities, and my view was that an ounce of demonstration would be worth a ton of explanation. I shoved the bouquet at him.

"Are you fond of flowers, Biffy?" I said.

"Eh?"

"Smell these."

Biffy extended the old beak in a careworn sort of way, and I pressed the bulb as per printed instructions on the label.

I do like getting my money's-worth. Elevenpence-ha'penny the thing had cost me, and it would have been cheap at double. The advertisement on the outside of the box had said that its effects were "indescribably ludicrous," and I can testify that it was no over-statement. Poor old Biffy leaped three feet in the air and smashed a small table.

"There!" I said.

The old egg was a trifle incoherent at first, but he found words fairly soon and began to express himself with a good deal of warmth.

"Calm yourself, laddie," I said, as he paused for breath. "It was no mere jest to pass an idle hour. It was a demonstration. Take this, Biffy, with an old friend's blessing, refill the bulb, shove it into Sir Roderick's face, press firmly, and leave the rest to him.

Poor old Biffy leaped three feet in the air and smashed a small table.

I'll guarantee that in something under three seconds the idea will have dawned on him that you are not required in his family."

Biffy stared at me.

"Are you suggesting that I squirt Sir Roderick?"

"Absolutely. Squirt him good. Squirt as you have never squirted before."

"But——"

He was still yammering at me in a feverish sort of way when there was a ring at the front-door bell.

"Good Lord!" cried Biffy, quivering like a jelly. "There he is. Talk to him while I go and change my shirt."

I had just time to refill the bulb and shove it beside Biffy's plate, when the door opened and Sir Roderick came in. I was picking up the fallen table at the moment, and he started talking brightly to my back.

"Good afternoon. I trust I am not—— Mr. Wooster!"

I'm bound to say I was not feeling entirely at my ease. There is something about the man that is calculated to strike terror into the stoutest heart. If ever there was a bloke at the very mention of whose name it would be excusable for people to tremble like aspens, that bloke is Sir Roderick Glossop. He has an enormous bald head, all the hair which ought to be on it seeming to have run into his eyebrows, and his eyes go through you like a couple of Death Rays.

"How are you, how are you, how are you?" I said, overcoming a slight desire to leap backwards out of the window. "Long time since we met, what?"

"Nevertheless, I remember you most distinctly, Mr. Wooster."

"That's fine," I said. "Old Biffy asked me to come and join you in mangling a bit of lunch."

He waggled the eyebrows at me.

"Are you a friend of Charles Biffen?"

" Oh, rather. Been friends for years and years."

He drew in his breath sharply, and I could see that Biffy's stock had dropped several points. His eye fell on the floor, which was strewn with things that had tumbled off the upset table.

" Have you had an accident ? " he said.

" Nothing serious," I explained. " Old Biffy had some sort of fit or seizure just now and knocked over the table."

" A fit ! "

" Or seizure."

" Is he subject to fits ? "

I was about to answer, when Biffy hurried in. He had forgotten to brush his hair, which gave him a wild look, and I saw the old boy direct a keen glance at him. It seemed to me that what you might call the preliminary spade-work had been most satisfactorily attended to and that the success of the good old bulb could be in no doubt whatever.

Biffy's man came in with the nose-bags and we sat down to lunch.

IT looked at first as though the meal was going to be one of those complete frosts which occur from time to time in the career of a constant luncher-out. Biffy, a very C-3 host, contributed nothing to the feast of reason and flow of soul beyond an occasional hiccup, and every time I started to pull a nifty, Sir Roderick swung round on me with such a piercing stare that it stopped me in my tracks. Fortunately, however, the second course consisted of a chicken fricassee of such outstanding excellence that the old boy, after wolfing a plateful, handed up his dinner-pail for a second instalment and became almost genial.

" I am here this afternoon, Charles," he said, with what practically amounted to bonhomie, " on what I might describe as a mission. Yes, a mission. This is most excellent chicken."

" Glad you like it," mumbled old Biffy.

" Singularly toothsome," said Sir Roderick, pronging another half ounce. " Yes, as I was saying, a mission. You young fellows nowadays are, I know, content to live in the centre of the most wonderful metropolis the world has seen, blind and indifferent to its many marvels. I should be prepared—were I a betting man, which I am not—to wager a considerable sum that you have never in your life visited even so historic a spot as Westminster Abbey. Am I right ? "

Biffy gurgled something about always having meant to.

" Nor the Tower of London ? "

No, nor the Tower of London.

" And there exists at this very moment, not twenty minutes by cab from Hyde Park Corner, the most supremely absorbing and educational collection of objects, both animate and inanimate, gathered from the four corners of the Empire, that has ever been assembled in England's history. I allude to the British Empire Exhibition now situated at Wembley."

" Leslie Henson told me one about Wembley yesterday," I said, to help on the cheery flow of conversation. " Stop me if you've heard it before. Chap goes up to deaf chap outside the exhibition and says, ' Is this Wembley ? ' ' Hey ? ' says deaf chap. ' Is this Wembley ? ' says chap. ' Hey ? ' says deaf chap. ' Is this Wembley ? ' says chap. ' No, Thursday,' says deaf chap. Ha, ha, I mean, what ?' "

The merry laughter froze on my lips. Sir Roderick sort of just waggled an eyebrow in my direction and I saw that it was back to the basket for Bertram. I never met a man who had such a knack of making a fellow feel like a waste-product.

" Have you yet paid a visit to Wembley, Charles ? " he asked. " No ? Precisely as I suspected. Well, that is the mission on which I am here this afternoon. Honoria wishes me to take you to Wembley. She says it will broaden your mind, in which view I am at one with her. We will start immediately after luncheon."

Biffy cast an imploring look at me.

" You'll come too, Bertie ? "

There was such agony in his eyes that I only hesitated for a second. A pal is a pal. Besides, I felt that, if only the bulb fulfilled the high expectations I had formed of it, the merry expedition would be cancelled in no uncertain manner.

" Oh, rather," I said.

" We must not trespass on Mr. Wooster's good nature," said Sir Roderick, looking pretty puff-faced.

" Oh, that's all right," I said. " I've been meaning to go to the good old exhibish for a long time. I'll slip home and change my clothes and pick you up here in my car."

There was a silence. Biffy seemed too relieved at the thought of not having to spend the afternoon alone with Sir Roderick to be capable of speech, and Sir Roderick was registering silent disapproval. And then he caught sight of the bouquet by Biffy's plate.

" Ah, flowers," he said. ' Sweet peas, if I am not in error. A charming plant, pleasing alike to the eye and the nose."

I caught Biffy's eye across the table. It was bulging, and a strange light shone in it.

" Are you fond of flowers, Sir Roderick ? " he croaked.

" Extremely."

" Smell these."

Sir Roderick dipped his head and sniffed. Biffy's fingers closed slowly over the bulb. I shut my eyes and clutched the table.

"Very pleasant," I heard Sir Roderick say. "Very pleasant indeed."

I opened my eyes, and there was Biffy leaning back in his chair with a ghastly look, and the bouquet on the cloth beside him. I realized what had happened. In that supreme crisis of his life, with his whole happiness depending on a mere pressure of the fingers, Biffy, the poor spineless fish, had lost his nerve. My closely-reasoned scheme had gone phut.

I opened my eyes, and there was Biffy leaning back in his chair with a ghastly look.

JEEVES was fooling about with the geraniums in the sitting-room window-box when I got home.

"They make a very nice display, sir," he said, cocking a paternal eye at the things.

"Don't talk to me about flowers," I said. "Jeeves, I know now how a general feels when he plans out some great scientific movement and his troops let him down at the eleventh hour."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes," I said, and told him what had happened.

He listened thoughtfully.

"A somewhat vacillating and changeable young gentleman, Mr. Biffen," was his comment when I had finished. "Would you be requiring me for the remainder of the afternoon, sir?"

"No. I'm going to Wembley. I just came back to change and get the car. Produce some fairly durable garments which can stand getting squashed by the many-headed, Jeeves, and then 'phone to the garage."

"Very good, sir. The grey cheviot lounge will, I fancy, be suitable. Would it be too much if I asked you to give me a seat in the car, sir? I had thought of going to Wembley myself this afternoon."

"Eh? Oh, all right."

"Thank you very much, sir."

I got dressed, and we drove round to Biffy's flat. Biffy and Sir Roderick got in at the back and Jeeves climbed into the front seat next to me. Biffy looked so ill-attuned to an afternoon's pleasure that my heart bled for the blighter and I made one last attempt to appeal to Jeeves's better feelings.

"I must say, Jeeves," I said, "I'm dashed disappointed in you."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir."

"Well, I am. Dashed disappointed. I do think you might rally round. Did you see Mr. Biffen's face?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then."

"If you will pardon my saying so, sir, Mr. Biffen has surely only himself to thank

if he has entered upon matrimonial obligations which do not please him."

"You're talking absolute rot, Jeeves. You know as well as I do that Honoria Glossop is an Act of God. You might just as well blame a fellow for getting run over by a truck."

"Yes, sir."

"Absolutely yes. Besides, the poor ass wasn't in a condition to resist. He told me all about it. He had lost the only girl he had ever loved, and you know what a man's like when that happens to him."

"How was that, sir?"

"Apparently he fell in love with some girl on the boat going over to New York, and they parted at the Customs sheds, arranging to meet next day at her hotel. Well, you know what Biffy's like. He forgets his own name half the time. He never made a note of the address, and it passed clean out of his mind. He went about in a sort of trance, and suddenly woke up to find that he was engaged to Honoria Glossop."

"I did not know of this, sir."

"I don't suppose anybody knows of it except me. He told me when I was in Paris."

"I should have supposed it would have been feasible to make inquiries, sir."

"That's what I said. But he had forgotten her name."

"That sounds remarkable, sir."

"I said that, too. But it's a fact. All he remembered was that her Christian name was Mabel. Well, you can't go scouring New York for a girl named Mabel, what?"

"I appreciate the difficulty, sir."

"Well, there it is, then."

"I see, sir."

We had got into a mob of vehicles outside the Exhibition by this time, and, some tricky driving being indicated, I had to suspend the conversation. We parked ourselves eventually and went in. Jeeves drifted away, and Sir Roderick took charge of the expedition. He headed for the Palace of Industry, with Biffy and myself trailing behind.

Well, you know, I have never been much of a lad for exhibitions. The citizenry in the mass always rather puts me off, and after I have been shuffling along with the multitude for a quarter of an hour or so I feel as if I were walking on hot bricks. About this particular binge, too, there seemed to me a lack of what you might call human interest. I mean to say, millions of people, no doubt, are so constituted that they scream with joy and excitement at the spectacle of a stuffed porcupine-fish or a glass jar of seeds from Western Australia—but not Bertram. No; if you will take the word of one who would not deceive you, not Bertram. By the time we had tottered out of the Gold Coast village and were working towards the Palace of Machinery, everything pointed to my shortly executing a quiet sneak in the direction of that rather jolly Planters' Bar in the West Indian section. Sir Roderick had whizzed us past this at a high rate of speed, it touching no chord in him; but I had been able to observe that there was a sprightly sportsman behind the counter mixing things out of bottles and stirring them up with a stick in long glasses that seemed to have ice in them, and the urge came upon me to see more of this man. I was about to drop away from the main body and become a straggler, when something pawed at my coat-sleeve. It was Biffy, and he had the air of one who has had about sufficient.

There are certain moments in life when words are not needed. I looked at Biffy, Biffy looked at me. A perfect understanding linked our two souls.

"?"

"!"

Three minutes later we had joined the Planters.

I HAVE never been in the West Indies, but I am in a position to state that in certain of the fundamentals of life they are streets ahead of our European civilization. The man behind the counter, as kindly a bloke as I ever wish to meet, seemed to guess our requirements the moment we hove in view. Scarcely had our elbows touched the wood before he was leaping to and fro, bringing down a new bottle with each leap. A planter, apparently, does not consider he has had a drink unless it contains at least seven ingredients, and I'm not saying, mind you, that he isn't right. The man behind the bar told us the things were called Green Swizzles; and, if ever I marry and have a son, Green Swizzle Wooster is the name that will go down on the register, in memory of the day his father's life was saved at Wembley.

After the third, Biffy breathed a contented sigh.

"Where do you think Sir Roderick is?" he said.

"Biffy, old thing," I replied, frankly, "I'm not worrying."

"Bertie, old bird," said Biffy, "nor am I."

He sighed again, and broke a long silence by asking the man for a straw.

"Bertie," he said, "I've just remembered something rather rummy. You know Jeeves?"

I said I knew Jeeves.

"Well, a rather rummy incident occurred as we were going into this place. Old

Jeeves sidled up to me and said something rather rummy. You'll never guess what it was."

"No. I don't believe I ever shall."

"Jeeves said," proceeded Biffy, earnestly, "and I am quoting his very words—Jeeves said, 'Mr. Biffen'—addressing me, you understand——"

"I understand."

"'Mr. Biffen,' he said, 'I strongly advise you to visit the——'"

"The what?" I asked, as he paused.

"Bertie, old man," said Biffy, deeply concerned, "I've absolutely forgotten!"

I stared at the man.

"What I can't understand," I said, "is how you manage to run that Herefordshire place of yours for a day. How on earth do you remember to milk the cows and give the pigs their dinner?"

"Oh, that's all right! There are divers blokes about the places—hirelings and menials, you know—who look after all that."

"Ah!" I said. "Well, that being so, let us have one more Green Swizzle, and then hey for the Amusement Park."

WHEN I indulged in those few rather bitter words about exhibitions, it must be distinctly understood that I was not alluding to what you might call the more earthy portion of these curious places. I yield to no man in my approval of those institutions where on payment of a shilling you are permitted to slide down a slippery run-way sitting on a mat. I love the Jiggle-Joggle, and I am prepared to take on all and sundry at Skee Ball for money, stamps, or Brazil nuts.

But, joyous reveller as I am on these occasions, I was simply not in it with old Biffy. Whether it was the Green Swizzles or merely the relief of being parted from Sir Roderick, I don't know, but Biffy flung himself into the pastimes of the proletariat with a zest that was almost frightening. I could hardly drag him away from the Whip, and as for the Switchback, he looked like spending the rest of his life on it. I managed to remove him at last, and he was wandering through the crowd at my side with gleaming eyes, hesitating between having his fortune told and taking a whirl at the Wheel of Joy, when he suddenly grabbed my arm and uttered a sharp animal cry.

"Bertie!"

"Now what?"

He was pointing at a large sign over a building.

"Look! Palace of Beauty!"

I tried to choke him off. I was getting a bit weary by this time. Not so young as I was.

"You don't want to go in there," I said. "A fellow at the club was telling me about that. It's only a lot of girls. You don't want to see a lot of girls."

"I do want to see a lot of girls," said Biffy, firmly. "Dozens of girls, and the more unlike Honoria they are, the better. Besides, I've suddenly remembered that that's the place Jeeves told me to be sure and visit. It all comes back to me. 'Mr. Biffen,' he said, 'I strongly advise you to visit the Palace of Beauty.' Now, what the man was driving at or what his motive was, I don't know; but I ask you, Bertie, is it wise, is it safe, is it judicious ever to ignore Jeeves's lightest word? We enter by the door on the left."

I don't know if you know this Palace of Beauty place? It's a sort of aquarium full of the delicately-nurtured instead of fishes. You go in, and there is a kind of cage with a female goggling out at you through a sheet of plate glass. She's dressed in some weird kind of costume, and over the cage is written "Helen of Troy." You pass on to the next, and there's another one doing jiu-jitsu with a snake. Sub-title, Cleopatra. You get the idea—Famous Women Through the Ages and all that. I can't say it fascinated me to any great extent. I maintain that lovely woman loses a lot of her charm if you have to stare at her in a tank. Moreover, it gave me a rummy sort of feeling of having wandered into the wrong bedroom at a country house, and I was flying past at a fair rate of speed, anxious to get it over, when Biffy suddenly went off his rocker.

At least, it looked like that. He let out a piercing yell, grabbed my arm with a sudden clutch that felt like the bite of a crocodile, and stood there gibbering.

"Wuk!" ejaculated Biffy, or words to that general import.

A large and interested crowd had gathered round. I think they thought the girls were going to be fed or something. But Biffy paid no attention to them. He was pointing in a loony manner at one of the cages. I forget which it was, but the female inside wore a ruff, so it may have been Queen Elizabeth or Boadicea or someone of that period. She was rather a nice-looking girl, and she was staring at Biffy in much the same pop-eyed way as he was staring at her.

"Mabel!" yelled Biffy, going off in my ear like a bomb.

I can't say I was feeling my chirpiest. Drama is all very well, but I hate getting mixed up in it in a public spot; and I had not realized before how dashed public this spot was. The crowd seemed to have doubled itself in the last five seconds, and, while most of them had their eye on Biffy,

Biffy flung himself into the pastimes of the proletariat with a zest that was almost frightening.

quite a goodish few were looking at me as if they thought I was an important principal in the scene and might be expected at any moment to give of my best in the way of wholesome entertainment for the masses.

Biffy was jumping about like a lamb in the springtime—and, what is more, a feeble-minded lamb.

"Bertie! It's her! It's she!" He looked about him wildly. "Where the deuce is the stage-door?" he cried. "Where's the manager? I want to see the house-manager immediately."

And then he suddenly bounded forward and began hammering on the glass with his stick.

"I say, old lad!" I began, but he shook me off.

These fellows who live in the country are apt to go in for fairly sizeable clubs instead of the light canes which your well-dressed man about town considers suitable for metropolitan use; and down in Herefordshire, apparently, something in the nature of a knob-kerrie is *de rigueur*. Biffy's first slosh smashed the glass all to hash. Three more cleared the way for him to go into the cage without cutting himself. And, before the crowd had time to realize what a wonderful bob's-worth it was getting in exchange for its entrance-fee, he was inside, engaging the girl in earnest conversation. And at the same moment two large policemen rolled up.

You can't make policemen take the romantic view. Not a tear did these two blighters stop to brush away. They were inside the cage and out of it and marching Biffy through the crowd before you had time to blink. I hurried after them, to do what I could in the way of soothing Biffy's

last moments, and the poor old lad turned a glowing face in my direction.

"Chiswick, 60873," he bellowed in a voice charged with emotion. "Write it down, Bertie, or I shall forget it. Chiswick, 60873. Her telephone number."

And then he disappeared, accompanied by about eleven thousand sightseers, and a voice spoke at my elbow.

"Mr. Wooster! What—what—what is the meaning of this?"

Sir Roderick, with bigger eyebrows than ever, was standing at my side.

"It's all right," I said. "Poor old Biffy's only gone off his crumpet."

He tottered.

"What?"

"Had a sort of fit or seizure, you know."

"Another!" Sir Roderick drew a deep breath. "And this is the man I was about to allow my daughter to marry!" I heard him mutter.

I tapped him in a kindly spirit on the shoulder. It took some doing, mark you, but I did it.

"If I were you," I said, "I should call that off. Scratch the fixture. Wash it out absolutely, is my advice."

He gave me a nasty look.

"I do not require your advice, Mr. Wooster! I had already arrived independently at the decision of which you speak. Mr. Wooster, you are a friend of this man—a fact which should in itself have been sufficient warning to me. You will—unlike myself—be seeing him again. Kindly inform him, when you do see him, that he may consider his engagement at an end."

"Right-ho," I said, and hurried off after the crowd. It seemed to me that a little bailing-out might be in order.

IT was about an hour later that I shoved my way out to where I had parked the car. Jeeves was sitting in the front seat, brooding over the cosmos. He rose courteously as I approached.

"You are leaving, sir?"

"I am."

"And Sir Roderick, sir?"

"Not coming. I am revealing no secrets, Jeeves, when I inform you that he and I have parted brass-rags. Not on speaking terms now."

"Indeed, sir? And Mr. Biffen? Will you wait for him?"

"No. He's in prison."

"Really, sir?"

"Yes. Laden down with chains in the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat. I tried to bail him out, but they decided on second thoughts to coop him up for the night."

"What was his offence, sir?"

"You remember that girl of his I was telling you about? He found her in a tank at the Palace of Beauty and went after her by the quickest route, which was *viâ* a plate-glass window. He was then scooped up and borne off in irons by the constabulary." I gazed sideways at him. It is difficult to bring off a penetrating glance out of the corner of your eye, but I managed it. "Jeeves," I said, "there is more in this than the casual observer would suppose. You told Mr. Biffen to go to the Palace of Beauty. Did you know the girl would be there?"

"Yes, sir."

This was most remarkable and rummy to a degree.

"Dash it, do you know everything?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Jeeves, with an indulgent smile. Humouring the young master.

"Well, how did you know that?"

"I happen to be acquainted with the future Mrs. Biffen, sir."

"I see. Then you knew all about that business in New York?"

"Yes, sir. And it was for that reason that I was not altogether favourably disposed towards Mr. Biffen when you were first kind enough to suggest that I might be able to offer some slight assistance. I mistakenly supposed that he had been trifling with the girl's affections, sir. But when you told me the true facts of the case I appreciated the injustice I had done to Mr. Biffen and endeavoured to make amends."

"Well, he certainly owes you a lot. He's crazy about her."

"That is very gratifying, sir."

"And she ought to be pretty grateful to you, too. Old Biffy's got fifteen thousand a year, not to mention more cows, pigs, hens, and ducks than he knows what to do with. A dashed useful bird to have in any family."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me, Jeeves," I said, "how did you happen to know the girl in the first place?"

Jeeves looked dreamily out into the traffic.

"She is my niece, sir. If I might make the suggestion, sir, I should not jerk the steering-wheel with quite such suddenness. We very nearly collided with that omnibus."

(Another story by P. G. Wodehouse next month.)

THE DUEL

by

L. J. BEESTON

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

"ON a deep and menacing note our business terminates," said Karpinski, the Polish musician. "From big distances we have come here to meet one another, following the instructions of the powerful organization which we represent. We meet for the first time, and with profit. It was not unattended with danger. *N'importe.* We have exchanged ideas; we have made reports; we have thrown out suggestions; we have decided where next to sow our seeds."

He laid his beautiful white fingers on the table's edge and smiled engagingly at his three companions. Karpinski had a charming smile; he was a charming pianist; but he was also a distributor of a deadly subversive propaganda.

"All that is so," said Robberson, the Social Conflagrationist from Utah. "On so short an acquaintance we may not understand one another through and out, but we understand what we have been talking about and what we intend to do."

"The hour grows late, shentlemens," commented Josephs, the seller of garments in Houndsditch. "Our arrangements are perfected. And if there is danger—as you, Mishtaire Karpinski, seem to think possible——"

"It is unquestionable," interrupted O'Bourne, the priest from over the Irish Sea. "And if any one of us here has a nervous system which is not of the most robust, then that one is not in harmony with his environment."

He had a full, round, unctuous voice, and he rolled it in the direction of the Houndsditch speaker.

"All is all right, messieurs," soothed Karpinski, with a gracious movement. "Do the police know of the existence of our organization? Undoubtedly they know of it. Are we watched? We have every reason to believe it. More—much more, we watch them watching. They have a department which concerns itself in such matters as have formed the basis of our discussion. We know of that department, and we have the name of its chief. He is called Detective-Inspector Daggas."

"It is rather a terrible name," said Josephs, uneasily.

"He is rather a terrible man," said O'Bourne, with composure.

"Why do we speak of these things now?" said Robberson.

"Be easy, friends," smiled Karpinski, sweetly. "We are in safe hands. Indeed, the situation is full of interest. I am at liberty to inform you that our organization was more careful of us than you were possibly aware. It attached so much importance to our meeting here that one was deputed to note likely police movements. Ferrari, who uses this office for his legitimate business, has his eyes on that police department of which I spoke, and he is not likely to let them glide from off Detective-Inspector Daggas. Be easy, therefore; be restful. I have no fear."

"All this is news to me," grunted Robberson.

"Pleasant news," said Karpinski.

"Well, shentlemens, what are we waiting for?" demanded Josephs.

At that instant the telephone bell trilled.

O'Bourne, who was nearest to the instrument, got up and went to it.

"One of Ferrari's customers," suggested Robberson.

"At this hour—I think not," dissented Josephs.

"Caller wants you, Karpinski," said O'Bourne.

Karpinski went to the 'phone, which

Copyright, 1924, by L. J. Beeston.

was an old-style instrument against a wall, and almost at once commenced to speak in his own language.

"I don't like that," said Josephs, pitching his voice low so as not to interfere with Karpinski.

Robberson gave him a look of cool contempt. "With cold feet like yours I wonder that you take part in these affairs," he sneered.

"Silence, if you please," begged Karpinski, half turning.

Josephs reached out for his shabby hat. O'Bourne shrugged his shoulders and lighted a cigarette. Robberson put his heels on the table. All waited.

THE notes of eight hours rolled from one of the City churches; then from another; then were chimed from a third. Silence descended, broken only by the soft and flexuous sound of Karpinski's voice at the transmitter. The others listened in an utter detachment. Soon the speaker hung up the receiver. He came back slowly, beating his palms together softly, reflectively.

"That was Ferrari, my friends," he informed. "He was speaking to me in my own tongue, which fortunately he knows. Let us keep cool. He has made a tremendous discovery. Our assembling here, which was made so much a secret, got to the ears of that police bureau."

"Oh, my Gott!" cried Josephs.

"It appears to me," remarked the Irishman, calmly, "that our Ferrari is somewhat slow in his methods."

"Is the place watched?" demanded Robberson.

"The sleuth Daggas," went on Karpinski, standing up with his finger-tips upon the table, "has been, in a way, too much for Ferrari. He has set his heart—his very soul—on capturing us *en masse*, with our oral and written deliberations."

"Damn him!" snapped Robberson.

"Certainly, certainly," said O'Bourne, unflustered. "But if the occasion is pressing we will destroy our written deliberations, as you call them; and as for spoken words, since this ambitious police officer was not in the room to hear them——"

"Ah, but he *is* in the room," interrupted Karpinski.

A smile, grim and lightning-like, passed over the face of Inspector Daggas.

Every man turned his head, darting glances into every corner.

"Where? Where?" gasped the Houndsditch merchant.

"In this room," continued Karpinski. "We will, if you please, not lose our heads. Ferrari has certain and positive knowledge. Four of us were to meet here to-night; he arrested one of the four; he learned from him all he wanted to know; and in the place of that luckless one, bearing his name and details which were necessary to enable him to carry out his purpose, the police sleuth attended our meeting. *Voilà!*"

All of which was so undeniably correct that Detective Daggas permitted himself the luxury of a second smile, though of the faintest kind.

Like a flash O'Bourne snapped: "Which one was arrested?"

"Ah, could I but answer that question!" said Karpinski. "But, indeed, Ferrari does not know; it was so well done; it has been kept so very obscure. But he is not idle. We can trust Ferrari. It is his brains against the policeman's."

Josephs stuttered and stammered. "What, Mishtaire Karpinski, you mean to say that one of us at this table is an inspector of detectives?"

"So Ferrari has informed me. *You* yourself may be the man; so may I; O'Bourne; Robberson—any one of us."

They all looked at each other, aghast at a situation which they could hardly realize.

"Can this thing be true?" gasped Robberson.

"Ferrari says so," answered Karpinski.

"Then are we all done for!" exclaimed Josephs.

"Ah, that is to tell the lion who is in our midst that we are afraid of him," said O'Bourne, with loud deliberation. "The question is—what is to be done to encounter so novel a situation?"

"Ferrari is going to ring up again in from five to ten minutes, when he hopes to have fuller information, or be able to advise us," informed Karpinski. "Let us be seated and wait for his call; we can do nothing else."

"Shentlemens, I should prefer to go, if you haf no objections," implored the Hebrew, agitatedly.

"And I shall go without waiting for objections," cut in Robberson.

"No—no—no!" implored Karpinski, stretching out his arms in deprecation. "Let us wait for Ferrari's second call."

"Sit you down, Robberson," said O'Bourne, sternly. 'If you should be this wily sleuth your departure would make things awkward for the rest."

"But if I am not he, then my starting to leave might make him unmask his batteries and so disclose himself," demurred Robberson.

"This is deep logic," sighed Josephs.

"Best remain," insisted Karpinski. "Ferrari will not fail."

There was a profound silence. They all

glared at each other. The detective longed to smile a third time, but he glared with the rest.

"Ferrari may not have another chance to communicate," said one of them, gloomily.

"Let us be patient," pleaded Karpinski. "I have every confidence in that strong man. He, and he only, can extricate us."

"But if we learn the truth from him; if we find which one of us is this accursed police spy, what then?" queried Josephs, half-wildly.

"We will decide when we do know," said O'Bourne. "He has possessed himself of certain secrets which will be very dangerous to him. In the meantime, there is the matter of our written documents to consider."

"Wait—wait for Ferrari's instructions," Karpinski insisted. "He will know what to do. He was deputed to guard us. His honour is involved. Remember that every word we utter is noted by——ah, Ferrari!"

The telephone bell had shrilled again.

Three pairs of suspicious eyes fixed themselves intently upon Karpinski as he unclipped the receiver.

"Karpinski may be the detective," Robberson whispered.

"May be," answered O'Bourne, in the same tone.

"Ferrari speaking," said Karpinski, turning swiftly to his companions, then back again to the 'phone. The conversation over the wire did not last long. He hung up the receiver and returned to the table.

"Ferrari will be here in ten minutes," he announced, calmly.

"Excellent," murmured Inspector Daggas. "I shall net them all, including the worst of the bunch."

"That is good hearing," rolled O'Bourne, "*if* he knows the spy hidden in our midst."

"He does know him," replied Karpinski, quietly.

"So much the worse for this detective," said Josephs.

Inspector Daggas chuckled deep in his throat. He had two plain-clothes officers on the stairs.

A TAXI-CAB stopped near Mark Lane, and there stepped out a very tall and rather slim man who wore a light dust-coat over evening dress. He stepped out quickly—every movement showing the athlete; and as he paid his fare his black eyes sparkled, and his mouth, which was adorned by a tooth-brush moustache, showed by its fixed lines that this man was on the verge of doing something, and that it would not be child's play.

He swiftly vanished up a narrow alley, and the driver stared after him with the words "A tough card" flitting through his brain.

This man was Ferrari, and he had made up his mind to save his friends. He had received intimation of the peril while dining at an ambassador's in Curzon Street. He was one of the strongest members of that organization which believed in pulling everything down as a prelude to a new order of laws.

He plunged into the narrow streets, which were deserted at that after-business hour, and came to a halt in a tiny quadrangle fashioned by the walls of warehouses and a block of offices, and containing two galvanized-iron dust repositories filled with litter. An iron fire stairway, very narrow, zigzagged its way to the roof of one of the buildings, and up it went Ferrari with the lightness of a cat. At the topmost stage he stopped—necessarily.

Close to him was a dusty window through which a light streamed. It was the window of the office which he rented; to peer through it was not impossible, though not easy, for he had to lean forward at rather a risky angle. He leaned forward.

He saw four men seated at a table. They were not moving; they were not speaking. In immobile attitudes they were waiting. Only their eyes moved, and these rolled in keen and heated glances as each of the sitters sought the faces of the others.

These men were Karpinski, Robberson, Josephs, and O'Bourne. Or, rather, three of the bearers of those names were there; the fourth, who had no right to the name, was Detective-Inspector Daggas.

The sparkling black orbs on the other side of the window regarded each man with the utmost intensity, and the tooth-brush moustache stirred a little under a grim smile.

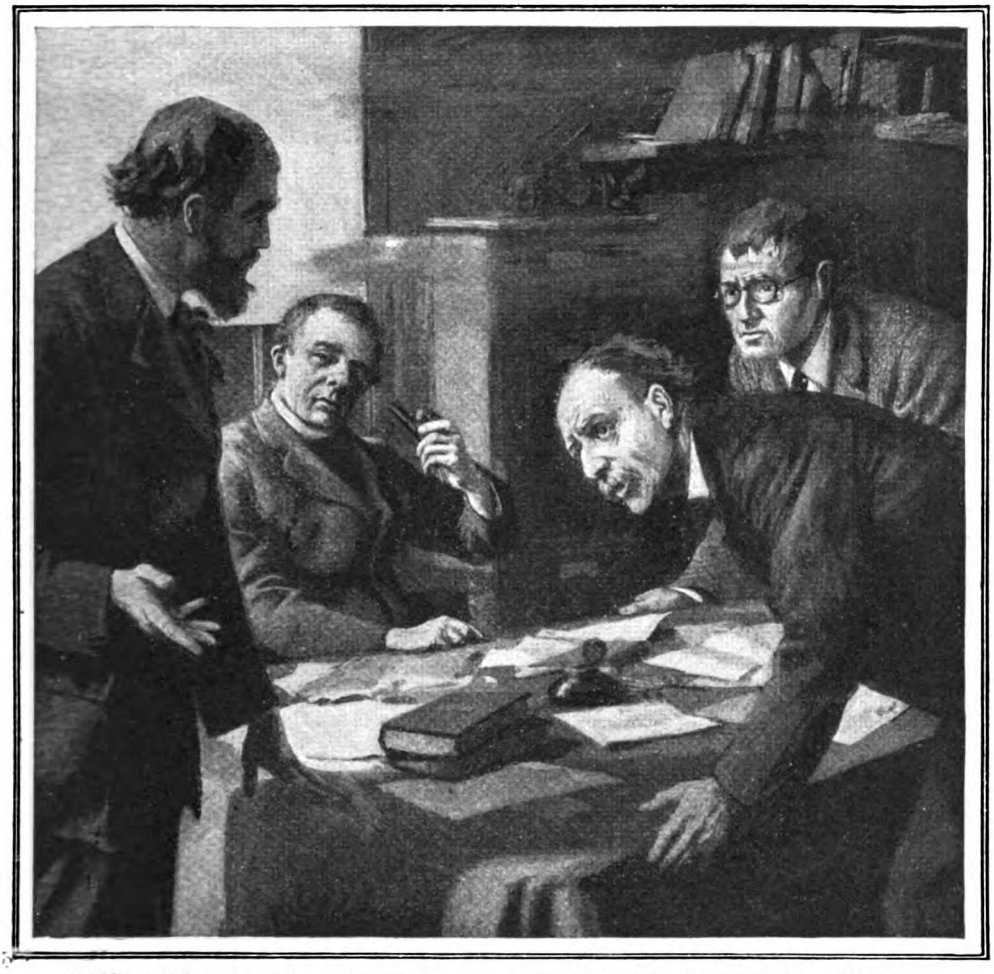
"That is a clever man in there," said the watcher to himself. "And undeniably a brave one. I will beat him—but how?"

There was the window. It was not fastened, but it was shut. To lean forward, throw open the lower sash, and scramble in could be done, but it would prove an awkward feat, and before he found himself inside—long before—the detective in the room would have taken the alarm and adopted his own plan of action.

"He knows that the rest of us know about him," reflected Ferrari, drawing back. "They are waiting for me, as I instructed. Since ingress by the window is impolitic I must go in by the door."

He disappeared.

"Thought better of it," said Inspector



"What, Mishtaire Karpinski, you mean to say that one of us at this table is an inspector of detectives?"

Daggas to himself, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

His position at the table, which he had not cared to move, gave him a view o he window; and he had caught the faint and dust-blurred outline of Ferrari's face on the other side of the pane.

Within less than four minutes Ferrari entered the building in a conventional way. It was a busy stone hive during the day, but the workers had departed. Only the caretaker remained, domiciled in the basement. On the ground floor were shipping offices, and a smell of wine came up from mysterious vaults. The premises were a couple of centuries old, its steps of stone channelled by much human passing up and down their seven flights, and the thin iron balusters blackened and loosened in places. A single low-power electric bulb burned on each landing, where the offices ran to right and left, with names on their half-glass doors.

At the foot of the staircase Ferrari paused. His office was at the top. In it he conducted, ably, a not-unthriving business as middleman in certain engineers' requirements. He paused and looked up to the first landing, ran up lightly in his pumps, found the way clear, and continued to ascend, keeping close to the wall, making no sound. As he neared the topmost landing he saw that it was in comparative darkness. Either the light had failed up there or it had been switched off with intent.

"A trap; I am waited for," said Ferrari to himself.

He was not sure of this, but he had to be.

He went up the final flight but one on his hands and toes, against the uprights of the banisters. When he was at the top he listened, keeping down. He heard not a sound. He advanced a trifle. and so edged his head and shoulders rightwards as to risk a swift glance up the last flight, which led to the corridor where his office was.

In the three-parts dark he perceived two men. They were seated on the broad stone stairs, side by side, almost at the top.

Ferrari glided back like a snake, and like a snake he hissed—faintly.

"Police officers, waiting either for my friends to come down or possibly for me to go up," ran his rage-filled thought.

Was it checkmate? It seemed uncommonly like it. He dared not enter his office from outside, and he could not get in from inside.

He ground his teeth with anger. He had set his heart on saving his comrades and in baffling Detective-Inspector Daggas. He realized that it would not do for him to wait there, impotent. He might be surprised from below; even the caretaker might be coming up to attend to the deserted offices. Yet he could only hope to get by the waiting officers if they were asleep; and although they were as silent as to suggest slumber, yet that was a chance he did not care to accept.

HE looked down and around. How was it remotely possible for him, even with his strength and determination, to get by those men who——?

Suddenly he saw how he might beat them. He might climb outside the flight of stone stairs on which he crouched, and, a-swing over the well of the staircase, could cross the last landing but one, turn rightwards, and ascend the final flight, heaving himself up hand-over-hand, passing from the base of one rail to the next, and so get past the two men. In the semi-gloom they would scarcely see his fingers at the bottom of the rails, and there was no reason why he should not get past without making a sound.

In a flash Ferrari saw the possibilities of this, but he saw, also, that such an attempt would be an even greater strain upon his muscles than his nerves, while he would have to keep sufficient strength in reserve to lift himself up at the last, over the baluster, on to the top landing.

Could he do it? By Heaven, he would try! He descended a few steps, buttoned his coat, jammed his hat tightly over his brows, climbed the handrail, slid the few inches to the base of one of the uprights, and reached out his grasp to the next above.

The entire length of him swung in mid-air. Below was the sheer drop of the staircase well, right down to the vaults, to the stones of the cellars.

He pulled himself up by five of the stanchions and so reached the landing which divided him from the final flight. His task was somewhat relieved here because his progress was on the level; yet the strain was such that he began to feel it severely; and the first real fear that he might fail touched his heart as he started to climb the last flight, on which the two officers were seated.

Nerve tension was greatest here—was terrible. His hands must grasp the base of each successive rail without making the least sound, or he was lost; and, silent though he was, there was always the chance that his fingers might be seen.

A burning pain was in the thick of his arm muscles, and his shoulders ached increasingly. He had under-estimated the strain of such an ascent. He had to reach up with his right hand for each successive rail while heaving up the weight of his body with his left arm and wrist, and the effort was becoming intolerable. Five or six stairs yet divided him from the top landing, and he had almost, he judged, drawn level with the two men. They made not a sound, not a whisper, not a foot shuffle that might have helped to dull his hoarse breathing and the deep throbbing of his heart, which seemed so loud to his ears in spite of the restraint he put upon them.

As realization that he would never pass through the ordeal loomed before his reeling senses, a cold dew spread over his face, like an icy wind blowing upon it. He could not let go; he had no strength for a retreat. A sobbing groan rose to his lips, but he crushed it. One more effort—one!

As Ferrari called upon his fainting courage to save him, he felt the rail from which he was suspended coming away in his grip! It had been faulty for years, and the weight upon it tugged it from the stone socket. The desperate man, in that moment of agony, leaped for the next. He caught it, but hung inert, powerless, swooning, his head sagging backwards.

The slight noise might have betrayed him, but he was saved by the clang of the iron rod upon the far-down stones.

"What the devil's that?" exclaimed one of the men to the other. At the same instant both rose, ran down to the next landing, and peered over into the well, leaning forward, their faces down.

It was Ferrari's one chance, and all the force and despair in him rose to seize it. He heaved himself up to the banister-rail,

Ferrari felt the rail from which he was suspended coming away in his grip! The desperate man leaped for the next, caught it, but hung inert, powerless.

and half-climbed, half-fell, upon the stone stairs. For two seconds he lay in exhaustion, then dragged himself to the top of the flight and into the concealing corridor.

He stood up, resting his body against the wall opposite to his office, the sweat of superhuman effort trickling down his skin. He heard the officers talking in a low voice. One of them said :—

"Only the caretaker below tinkering with an iron."

As a matter of fact, the caretaker had gone out, this being the time for his evening drink.

The other yawned and remarked: "A mouldy, God-forsaken place, this, after business hours."

Ferrari waited two full minutes; the pounding of his heart subsided; he felt calmness come again to his wildly-tried nerves.

With deliberation he wiped his palms and

drew a pistol from one of the side-pockets of his coat. He stepped to the door of his office and grasped the handle.

For a moment or two he stood with closed eyes, visualizing the positions of the men inside, round the table, as he had seen them from the window. If they had not moved—and from their fixed and expectant attitudes they were not likely to have done so—then they were sitting with Karpinski at one end of the table facing the door, Josephs on the left side, O'Bourne on the right, and Robberson with his back to the door, opposite to Karpinski.

Ferrari's entry came like a thunderclap. At one instant—tense silence; the next—and he was among them and had found his man!

"Got you!" he snarled. "Not a whisper, not the least movement, or it's death and the devil for you, you over-smart police spy."

O'Bourne, Josephs, and Karpinski leaped to their feet. The same word rang from them simultaneously:—

"Robberson!"

"No other," said Ferrari, in a growl of satisfied fury. "Thank your lucky stars I was in time. Ah, keep still!" he menaced, grinding the pistol barrel into the nape of the man's neck, and a dangerous flame danced in his eyes.

"For Gott's sake, do not shoot him, Mishtaire Ferrari!" cried Josephs, appalled.

"It would serve him right," snapped O'Bourne.

"No murder," said Karpinski. "Ferrari, what are you going to propose?"

Feeling the steel rim driving into his flesh, Robberson uttered a groan. He made this sound of pain at the precise moment when the faintest possible chuckle trembled on the lips of the detective among them.

For Ferrari had got hold of the wrong man!

"This," said Ferrari, answering Karpinski's question: "you, Josephs, will go down into the court by the fire-ladder, while the rest of us deal with this meddler. You must go that way, for the stairs are watched. Proceed with great care; I do not think there is anyone watching the court, but if there is you must return. You will almost certainly find the way clear, however, and you will lose no time in getting a taxi. Leave it near, then come into the court again and whistle three times. We shall then have fixed up this police spy and shall be ready for you. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, Mishtaire Ferrari."

"Then go."

WITH fingers that trembled the Houndsditch dealer opened the window and clumsily got out upon the fire-staircase. He went down the first half of it slowly and with care, then expedited his movements so quickly that he all but crashed headlong.

"Easy, easy," he admonished himself. "Why the hurry? No need for haste; no need at all."

When he reached the tiny quadrangle he did not peer about, as ordered, for a possible lurking watcher. With swift and controlled steps he made his way through two or three passages and came out into the wide street. Here he picked up two police-constables on ordinary duty. Still repressing undue excitement he walked rapidly until he reached the business entrance of the premises which he had just left. The wine-smell floated up from the vaults, and he sniffed at it as if in enjoyment. He led the way up the stairs two at a time, and on the final flight he found his two plain-clothes men, whom he had believed to have been enticed away. A wrathful demand as to why they had permitted a man to get past them rushed to his lips, but he checked it for the time being. Savagely he snapped:—

"Follow me all. There may be a scrap."

He stepped across the corridor, flung back the door of the office with violence, and dashed in.

The room was empty!

He rushed to the window, but Ferrari and his three companions had fled that way some minutes ago.

"Tricked!" roared Inspector Daggas. "Damnation!" And again—"Damnation!"

HOW OUR NOVELISTS WRITE THEIR BOOKS

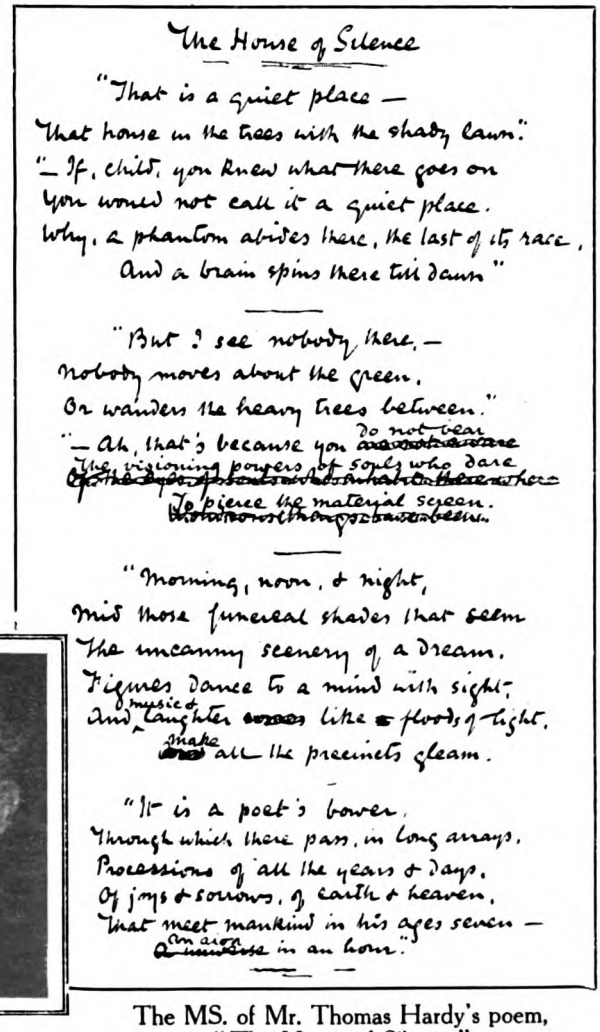
A Symposium of Eminent Authors

HERE is a symposium on how our leading authors create their books. They have been asked to tell us about the coming of ideas, the working of them out, the planning of plots and scenes, the development of characters, the actual writing of a story, or its dictation. We are admitted, as it were, to so many literary workshops, including that of the most illustrious living English writer, Thomas Hardy.

For years now, Mr. Hardy has only written verse, and it is fitting, therefore, that we should be privileged to reproduce the MS. of his poem, "The House of Silence," from "Moments of Vision." It is notable for its clear, vigorous, artistic handwriting, and is specially interesting for the alterations made in several of the lines. Many of Mr. Hardy's MSS. are among the treasures of our great libraries and museums, that of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" being in the British Museum, while "The Trumpet Major" is in the Royal Library at Windsor.

Hoppé.

MR. THOMAS HARDY.



The House of Silence

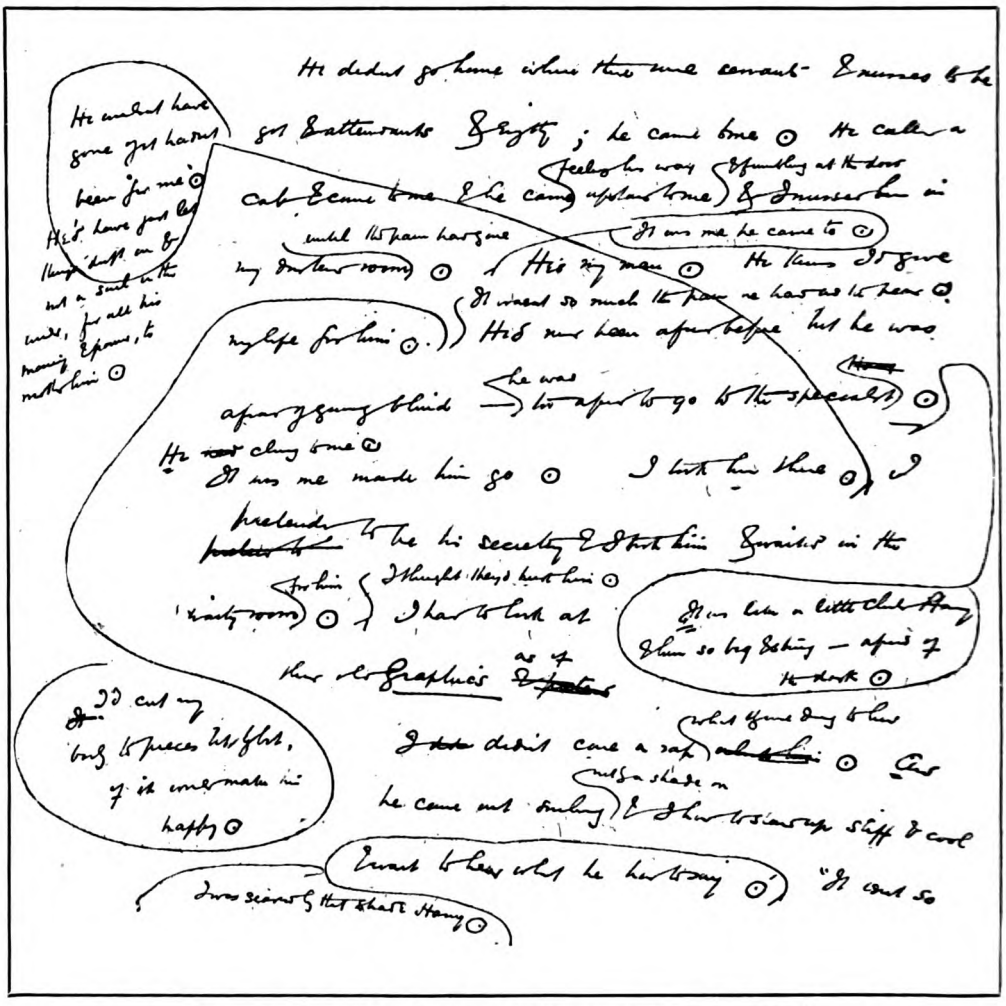
"That is a quiet place —
That house in the trees with the shady lawn."
"— If, child, you knew what there goes on
You would not call it a quiet place.
Why, a phantom abides there, the last of its race,
And a brain spins there till dawn"

"But I see nobody there, —
Nobody moves about the green,
Or wanders the heavy trees between."
"— Ah, that's because you do not hear
~~The visioning powers of souls who dare~~
~~To pierce the material screen.~~

"Morning, noon, & night,
Mid those funereal shades that seem
The uncanny scenery of a dream.
Figures dance to a mind with sight
And music & laughter make like floods of light,
~~and~~ all the precincts gleam.

"It is a poet's bower,
Through which there pass, in long arrays,
Processions of all the years & days,
Of joys & sorrows, of earth & heaven,
That meet mankind in his ages seven —
An aeon in an hour."

The MS. of Mr. Thomas Hardy's poem, "The House of Silence."

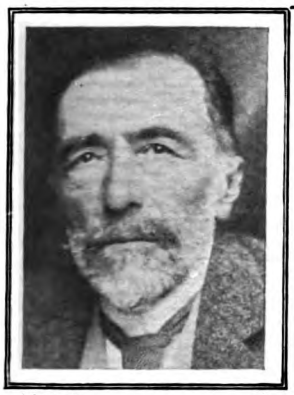


A passage from Mr. H. G. Wells's novel, "The Dream."

Hoppé.

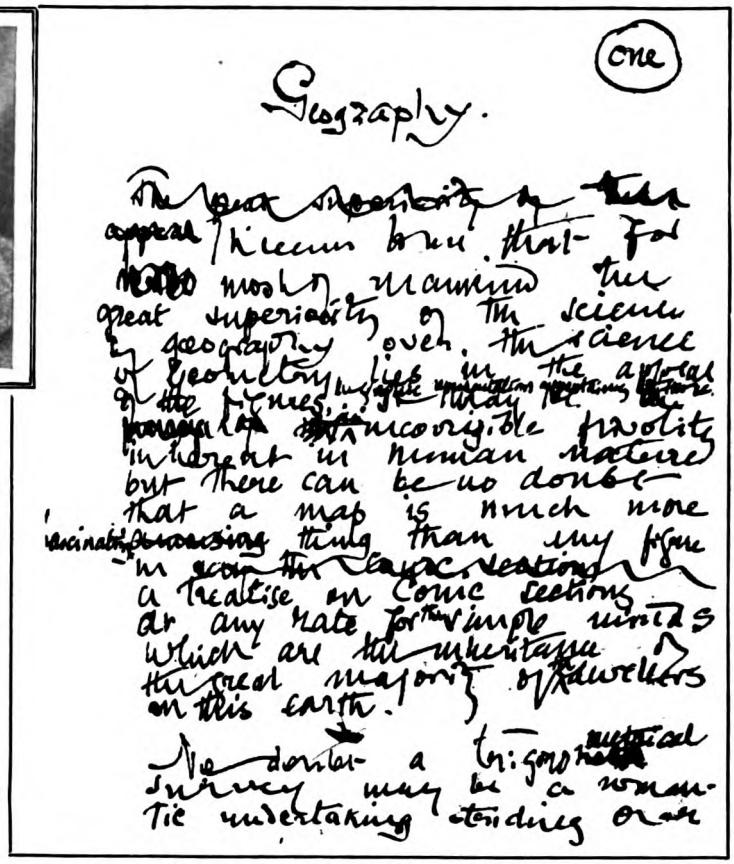
MR. H. G. WELLS.

Advanced as he is in many ways, Mr. H. G. Wells is old-fashioned beside some novelists, because in the first place he writes everything. Not only so, but he generally uses large sheets of paper, such as we are accustomed to in the manuscripts of the Victorians. A sheet by him shows how second thoughts and fuller thoughts come to him, and how deftly they are woven in. His actual writing has a lift in it, a ballooning sort of touch, such as one finds in his novels. Moreover, when his script becomes typescript he still works on it, before it goes to the publisher.



Arbuthnot.

THE LATE
MR. JOSEPH CONRAD.



one

Geography.

[illegible] appeal / Kneems to me that for most of mankind the great superiority of the science of geography over the science of geometry lies in the appeal of the figures, [illegible] incorrigible frivolity inherent in human nature but there can be no doubt that a map is much more [illegible] thing than any figure in [illegible] a treatise on Conic sections at any rate for the simple minds which are the inheritance of the great majority of the dwellers on this earth.

No doubt a trigonometrical survey may be a romantic undertaking striding over

A page of the MS. of Joseph Conrad's "The Romance of Travel," before his final corrections had been made.

Reproduced from the MS. in the possession of Mr. Gabriel Wells, of New York.

No man's written word on paper could be more characteristic of him than Joseph Conrad's was, and we shall always have his personality well reflected in his manuscripts. They are full of excursions without alarums, of up-strokes and down-strokes and flourishes, but ever they are seeking the harbour of perfect expression, which was his characteristic as a writer.

Essentially he was of the old, classic pattern of author; he had to write with his hand, like Hardy and Meredith and Morley, if he was to express himself in his art and his art in himself. But gout troubled him, took a particular affection for his writing hand, and, in later years, this caused him to try dictation. When he was engaged upon a big novel, like one on the Napoleonic times, which has been left unfinished, he attacked it in divers ways, by pen and by voice to a secretary. He would speak a part, have it typed, re-speak it, and so on, until he got where he wanted. If he had difficulty, at a particular sitting, with one chapter of a book, he would take up another, so that, altogether, his scheme of labour was long and arduous. His script and typescript proclaim that very emphatically, but if, in themselves, they make hard reading, they stand, by virtue of that, for the majestic prose which we associate with Conrad's novels in the permanency of print.

MR. BERNARD SHAW.

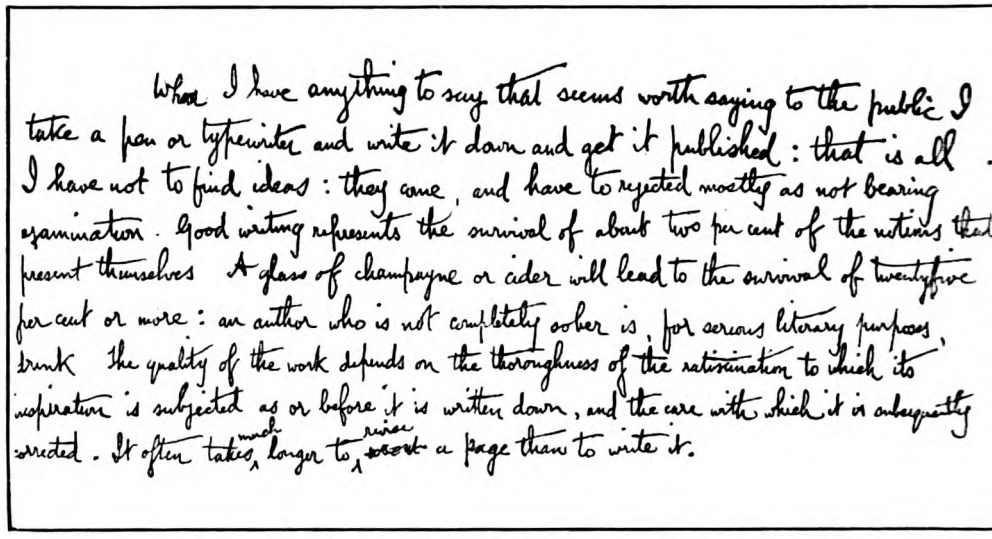
WHEN I have anything to say that seems worth saying to the public I take a pen or typewriter and write it down and get it published: that is all. I have not to find ideas: they come, and have to be rejected mostly as not bearing examination. Good writing represents the survival of about two per cent. of the notions that present themselves. A glass of champagne or cider will lead to the survival of twenty-five per cent. or more: an author who is not completely sober is, for serious literary purposes, drunk. The quality of the work depends on the thoroughness of the ratiocination to which its inspiration is subjected as or before it is written down, and the care with which it is subsequently corrected. It often takes much longer to revise a page than to write it.

There are two limits to this process. One is the cost, now very formidable, of press corrections, making it advisable to go over the manuscript or typescript much oftener than in the nineteenth century, when the cost of correction was comparatively negligible. The other is the endurance of the author, whose powers of attention to the same subject become exhausted long before he reaches perfection of statement. Unless circumstances allow the work to be laid aside and reconsidered after a good holiday (and circumstances seldom do) it cannot be carried beyond a point which falls short of completeness.

Some writers do all the work in their heads before they write it down, and revise very little. Others work as they write, and then work over their successive drafts, revising and correcting and modifying and filling in a good deal. Composers do the same: Mozart worked the first way, Beethoven the second. Shakespeare, of whom Jonson said that he never blotted a line, may have deliberately calculated that it was better to go ahead with Macbeth than to waste time (comparatively) in correcting Hamlet; but the result was that he never argued out his ideas: they are all at loose ends. Some imaginative work will not bear consideration, and would be spoiled by it; and some inspirations have to be left unreasoned and unexplained. Yet they should be so left deliberately, not lazily. Normally, the more work you put in, the better the book.

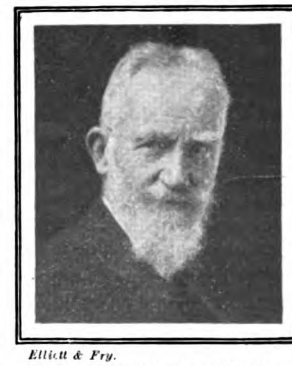
My technical procedure is as follows: I write in shorthand, when and where I can. A great deal of my later work has been written in the train between Hatfield and King's Cross. My secretary transcribes this on the typewriter. When I have gone over the typescript at least twice (sometimes much oftener) it goes to the printer. I revise two successive sets of proofs very carefully, and check the corrections on a third. Then I go to press. In the case of a play I write the dialogue first and then work out the stage business and superimpose it.

All young authors should read Anthony Trollope's Autobiography, now obtainable in a cheap edition. Many pages of it were written to help them; and it is very good reading as one of the honestest books of the kind ever written, because Trollope had the good sense to omit everything that he knew he could not be honest about.



When I have anything to say that seems worth saying to the public I take a pen or typewriter and write it down and get it published: that is all. I have not to find ideas: they come, and have to rejected mostly as not bearing examination. Good writing represents the survival of about two per cent of the notions that present themselves. A glass of champagne or cider will lead to the survival of twenty-five per cent or more: an author who is not completely sober is, for serious literary purposes, drunk. The quality of the work depends on the thoroughness of the ratiocination to which its inspiration is subjected as or before it is written down, and the care with which it is subsequently corrected. It often takes much longer to revise a page than to write it.

The MS. of the opening sentences of Mr. Bernard Shaw's contribution to this symposium.



Elliott & Fry.

MR. BERNARD SHAW.

MR. HUGH WALPOLE.

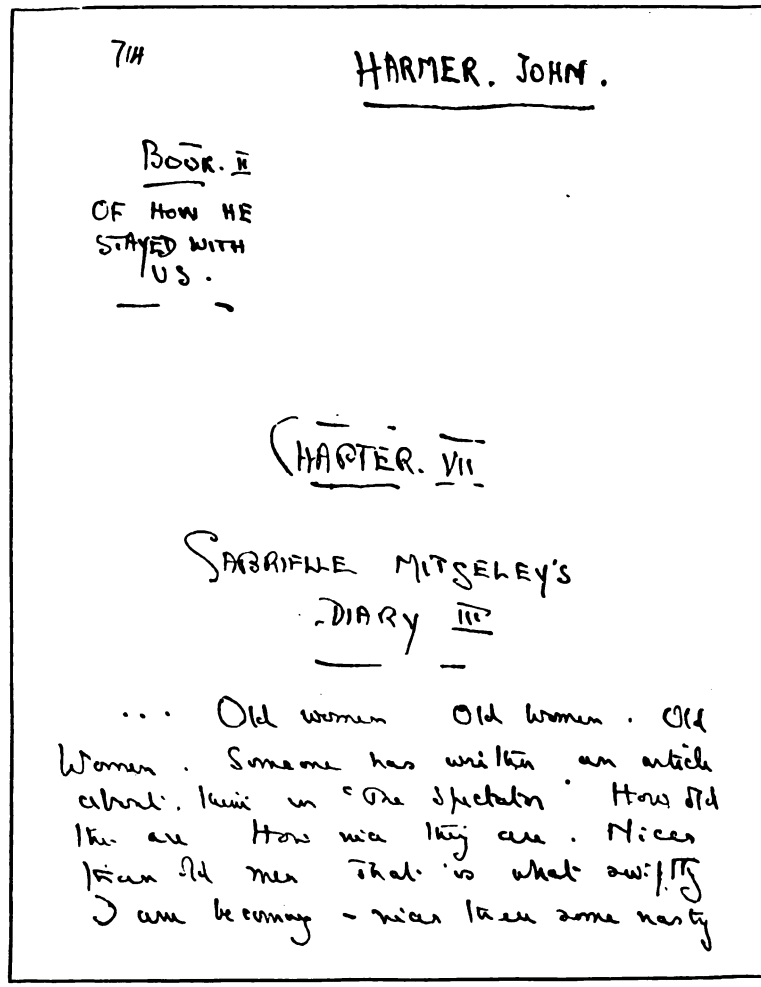
Vandyk.

MR. HUGH WALPOLE.

YOUR questions are difficult to answer. Because the real purpose of the novel is, as it seems to me, the creation of human character, it is, I suppose, a human being whom I see first, then others gather round him or her, some point of view of life envelops them, some background evolves behind them, and the fable is provided by the clash of several of these humans against others. It was in that way that "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill," "The Green Mirror," "The Captives," "The Cathedral," and my new novel, "The Old Ladies," came to me. A book is always in my head a year or more before I begin to write it. My books are all connected together in my mind, making for me a world of their own; the reason, I suppose, why my characters move from one book to another, a most inartistic proceeding, I'm told. But life seems to me more important than art, although art is a heaven-sent and glorious luxury. But all the great characters in fiction—Tom Jones, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Raskolnikoff, Lord Jim, Elizabeth Bennett—are life first and art afterwards.

Create one character like Jeanie Deans or Turgénieff's Liza and you may die happy. Scott was no conscious artist at all; Turgénieff was nothing else. They both achieved the one thing necessary for their job.

I write for my own pleasure and amusement. I'm afraid that I enjoy novel-writing immensely. I say "afraid" because novelists must sweat blood and tears, it seems. I would if I could, but I can't.



7/14

HARMER. JOHN.

BOOK. II

OF HOW HE STAYED WITH US.

CHAPTER. VII

GABRIELLE MITGELEY'S DIARY III

... Old women Old women. Old Women. Someone has written an article about them in "The Spectator" How old they are How nice they are. Nicer than old men That is what swiftly I am becoming - nicer than some nasty

A page of the novel on which Mr. Hugh Walpole is now working.

MR. F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

HOW does a story-writer do his work? By *hard* work. Once in a very long while (I speak for myself) a theme spontaneously presents itself, beautiful, full-fledged, and complete. But these are the angels' visits. Normally, I at least get a workable idea only after long searching for it, a process that may take hours, days, or even weeks. On the average, I have considered and rejected some scores of potential plots before I find the one that seems to "come alive" as I contemplate it.

Haweis.

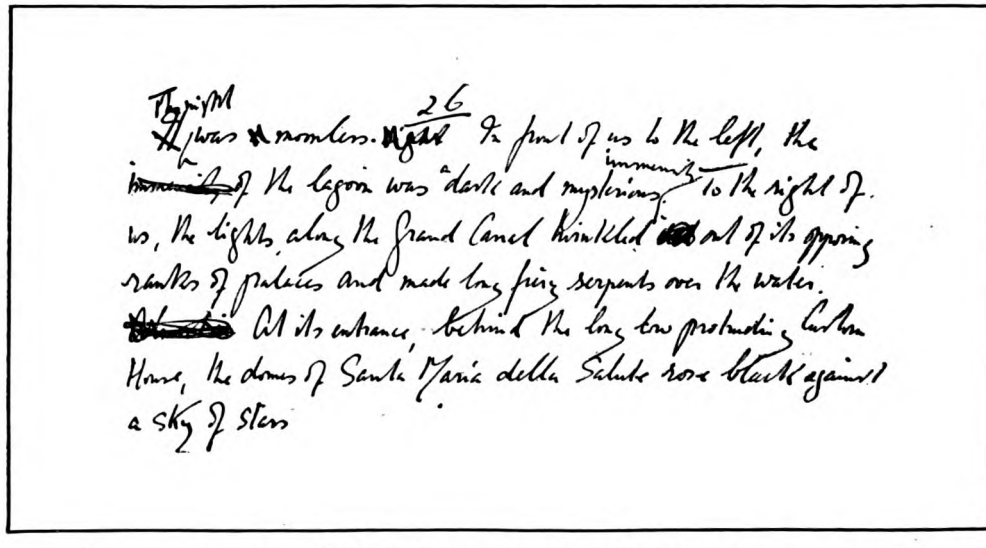
MR. F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

Many writers make a skeleton synopsis of the story before commencing to write it. For me, that would kill it. But I make quite sure that I have the whole thing complete in my head before sitting down to write the first word. Once the whole story is fully outlined and concrete to one's imagination, the actual writing is comparatively easy. If it is a really good idea, it seems to write itself.

Personally, I aim at the greatest possible precision of word and at a definitely conceived structure. I like a story to march logically and swiftly from an opening note to a climax, and resolve rapidly from that climax to a last word that is all the better if it can, in some way, echo the note of the first. There should, of course, be no word in it that does not capture the reader's instinctive sense that it is vitally germane to the matter.

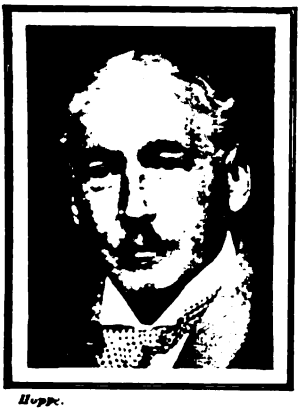
In description I try to stimulate the reader's own visual imagination, if possible to such a degree of vividness that he feels he is actually present at the scene. If I can do that, I am sure of his interest—and if I have got that I feel I have done my job. But I often write and re-write a story four or five times before I am satisfied that I cannot present it more dramatically and effectively — *i.e.*, more *interestingly*.

Personally, I do not dictate. The spoken word, in my case, tends to loose expression, and my aim is always at the maximum of concentration. I write out every word by hand in a rough draft, worked over again and again, and then I type it, putting the whole story once more "through the sieve," and often very materially altering it as I go on. The final result is that the Editor does not like the story you believe to be your masterpiece!



A passage from one of Mr. F. Britten Austin's "Q. Q." stories now appearing in this magazine.

MR. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.



Hoppé.

MR. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

I DON'T know how stories come to one. I expect the subliminal mind starts the business. I know it helps in the finishing. In my experience it is a great mistake to plan a story in too minute detail; get the essential skeleton and everything else will come, or ought to come, for the mind that works in the dark.

I believe all characters and most scenes that are any good come from the cellars of the mind; a character may be drawn from a living human being, but it is no good till it has gone below and received vitality and additions from the gnomes who are responsible for the dreams of man.

I never dictate or use a typewriter. I can no more imagine a writer dictating a book than I can imagine a painter dictating a picture. I can't, somehow, imagine a man writing a book with his tongue—at least, a book worth reading.

I like chapter headings, and of all the minor arts chapter heading is the most difficult. The chapter headings of a novel ought to suggest, and tickle the reader's imagination, not make bald and atrocious statements, such, for instance, as "Jane Intervenes."

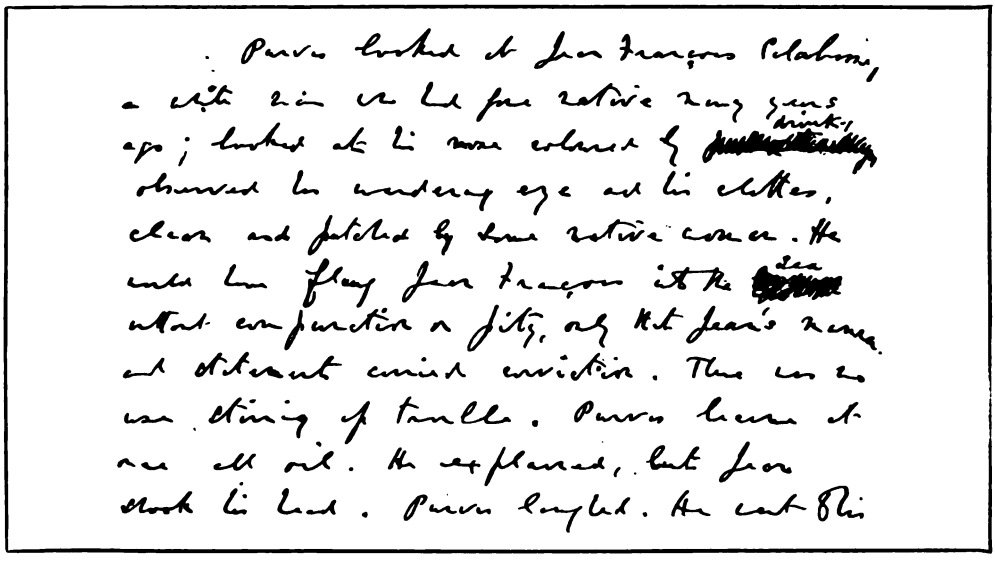
BARONESS VON HUTTEN.

"HOW would such and such a character develop in such and such conditions?"

This question, quite free from any idea of plot, or social or moral conditions, is the root of all my novels.

Pam was simply the clever and sensitive child of selfishly devoted lovers, and, that much settled, she did what she liked with me.

So did Sandy Sharrow, with his inherited



A portion of the MS. of the story Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole has written for the Christmas Number of "The Strand Magazine."

taste for brandy and his passion for the old house of his fathers; so did that unselfish little penny-a-liner Violet Walbridge, in "Happy House," once I had surrounded her with her insensitive, condescending, greedy family. (Violet was not, as Sir W. Robertson Nicoll believed, drawn from a living novelist.) In "Mothers-in-Law," it amused me to contrast an American and a Latin mother, each passionately devoted

Hoppé.

BARONESS VON HUTTEN.

to her child, each bound by her own nationality and heredity, and utterly unable to understand each other. The other characters in the book, and what there is of plot, came in such a way that I can hardly be blamed for them.

And now I have set Julia Vine - Innes—England is full of Julias—into an unusual hereditary and social environment, and let her struggle as best she could.

I work on a book for nearly a year, but the actual dictation or writing takes me about three weeks. This is, of course, regrettable, but it is for me an utter impossibility to write slowly.

I like writing more than anything in the world, and only wish people enjoyed reading my books as much as I enjoy writing them.

As to a typewriting machine, I'd as soon have a motor-bike, noise, vibration, stench, and all, in my study.

No. For me, "a clean sheet, a flowing pen, and thoughts that follow fast."

MISS REBECCA WEST.

I DO not know how I write my books, except that I write them on six writing pads at once. I write the rough draft of a page on the first page of a pad; then on the second I write the rough draft of a paragraph; then on the third I write the rough draft of a sentence; on the fourth and fifth I write the sentence more and more desperately; on the sixth I write the fair copy. People who do not otherwise admire my work tell me that this performance, particularly when carried on at a high speed, reminds them of Cinquevalli.

Beck & Macgregor.

MISS REBECCA WEST.

As regards the plot of the book, I think out a very elaborate plot for my books and short stories, complete from the first word to the last; I usually find at the end of the story that not one atom of this plot has survived. The characters take the story in charge. How one gets them I do not know; they come to one out of anywhere. I can't imagine taking a character from real life, unless one wishes to indulge in the pleasures of libel.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

THE imagination—that is, the part of the brain which creates character and which weaves plots—remains an entire mystery, though the subject has proved sufficiently interesting to raise a considerable literature in most civilized countries. Some time ago I had an interesting talk with Mr. Walter De La Mare concerning this very question, and we both agreed that the creative gift can neither be analysed nor explained. To my mind one of the greatest imaginative efforts of our time is "The Memoirs of a Midget," and I asked Mr. De La Mare what had led to his first inception of his heroine. His answer, which I am sure was a scrupulously true one, seemed to me a quite inadequate explanation of the genesis of that wonderful book.

Valuable as a plot mind may be to its owner, the possession of a creative gift means that there drifts from somewhere—no one knows from where or why—not a plot, but a series of characters, or perhaps more often a strong central character imbued not only with life, but with all the attributes which go to compose a human being. Now and again a writer can look back and say: "So-and-so made me think of writing so-and-so," but that is rare rather than usual.

In my own case I do know that the genesis of "The Lodger"—in some ways my best-known book—was owing to a chance sentence overheard at a dinner party which ran somewhat like this: "I know an old couple who believe that they had for a short time Jack the Ripper as lodger." I first wrote the tale as a short story, covering one dramatic incident. Then, when I was asked to write a serial for *The Daily Telegraph*, I told myself that my short story would

make a novel, this partly because if I write a short story I always feel I know all about the characters' pasts and future. But I repeat that with me, at any rate, what happened in the case of "The Lodger" was an exception. As a rule I have no idea why a series of characters, connected with a well-defined plot, suddenly drifts into my mind and finds there secure lodgment.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

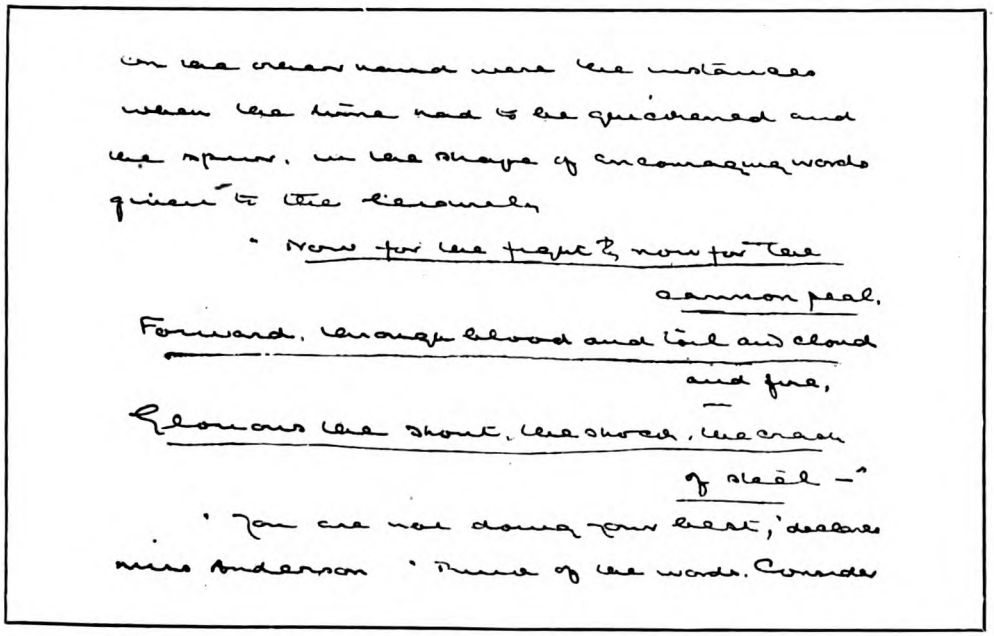
As to the working out of character and plot into a book, it is a mystery to me how this is achieved. For myself, I have very, very rarely made out any kind of synopsis, and when I have done so I have never remained true to it. Imaginary characters, if filled with the breath of life, invariably run away with their creator, and do what they choose to do. Even so, I fully admit the value, almost the necessity, of some sort of framework. I cannot even conceive the state of mind of the novelist who can say: "I have no idea when I begin a story how it is going to end." To my mind every novel, as well as every short story, should have a real framework, even if it only exists, as in my case, in the mind of the writer.

MR. W. PETT RIDGE.

I DISCLAIM any ability to teach the young or to give useful hints to the old. Before starting to write a story I set down a group of characters, with their names, ages, and occupations. Then comes the planning of about twenty chapters, and not until that is done do I begin to write. For me the old-fashioned nib does the recording work, from beginning to finish.

Elliott & Fry.

MR. W. PETT RIDGE.



On the other hand were the instances when the time had to be quickened and the spur, in the shape of encouraging words given to the leisurely

"Now for the fight & now for the cannon peal,
Forward, through blood and toil and cloud and fire,
Glorious the shout, the shock, the crash of steel —"

'You are not doing your best,' declares Miss Anderson 'Think of the words. Consider

A specimen of Mr. Pett Ridge's MS.

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU.

YOU ask me to tell you in a few words how I conceive and write a novel. As far as the conception goes, I am afraid I can tell you very little. My stories come to me in many different ways, but the first step is always one of inspiration. The original idea of "Life—and Erica," for instance, came to me through seeing a girl in a tea-shop. "Gerald Cranston's Lady" had its first origin in a newspaper report which announced the flight of a famous financier in an aeroplane to Paris, with his inamorata.

From such slight origins as these, inspiration—if I may still use the term—develops. Having visualized my central character or my principal situation, my imagination carries on—visualizing new characters, new situations, and the whole rough nucleus of the story I wish to tell.

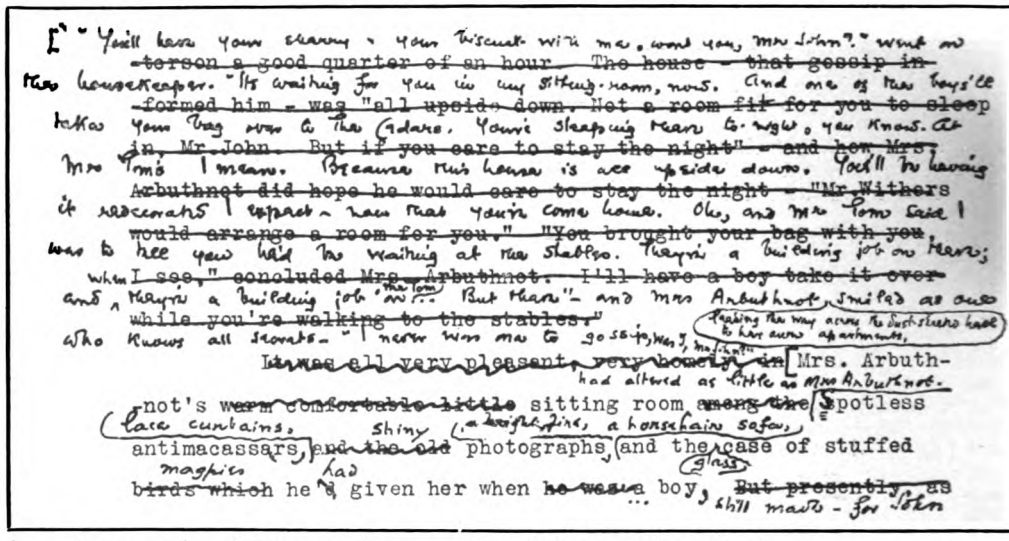
For in my humble view the main, and practically the only, duty of a novelist is story-telling. And it is for this reason that, once I have the rough nucleus of my tale, I dictate it rapidly to my secretary and thereafter proceed along perfectly set lines of what I can only describe as "constructional technique."

About this constructional technique I can tell you a good deal. I start, as I have said, with a rough nucleus of my story set out in about five thousand words. This done, I devote two, three, and sometimes six months to drafting out the exact scenario, in which all characters and all scenes are set out in their proper sequence, and allotted an appropriate number of words, according to their importance.

But it is only after this scenario is really finished that what I call my real work commences. My habits then are simple, business-like, and, I believe, efficient. Every morning at ten o'clock I start work and carry on till one, resuming again at five and carrying on till seven. All this time I dictate, with my original scenario in front of me; not particularly caring about style, but devoting myself mainly to incident and characterization. I carry on with dictation in this way either until I have finished a chapter or until inspiration (*for, after all, the whole thing, though one likes to consider it an intellectual process, is really a matter of inspiration backed by technique*) peters out. Then, and then only, do I commence my final polish, which is done with the pen in between and across the typed script of my final dictation.

All of which, I am afraid, will sound rather like the conjurer explaining his tricks to a baffled audience, but may serve some slight purpose for those who also wish to become conjurers.

(*To be continued.*)



A passage from "Masterson," the novel on which Mr. Gilbert Frankau is now engaged.

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU.

ANOTHER "Q. Q." STORY

No. 2

THE FOURTH DEGREE

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

SEBRIGHT, of Scotland Yard, sat in our office. He had dropped in, as he often did, unofficially, for a friendly yarn.

"Unpleasant business round at the Foreign Office this morning, Q. Q.," he remarked, as he helped himself to one of the excellent cigarettes which the Chief, though a rigid non-smoker himself, kept hospitably for his visitors. "I suppose you've heard?"

Q. Q. raised his eyebrows.

"No," he said. "What's the trouble?"

"Arbuthnot shot himself."

"Arbuthnot? Shot himself?" The Chief's voice was at once startled and incredulous.

"Yep." Sebright nodded casually, and then savoured again the aroma of the cigarette between his fingers. "First-rate brand these of yours, Quayne. Where do you get 'em?"

Mr. Quayne ignored this cold-bloodedly irrelevant question. He leaned forward across his desk, in a curious sudden alertness of expression that in any other man I should have called excitement. But Q. Q. was never excited. Merely that ice-cold brain of his, at the appropriate stimulus, could function with lightning rapidity, leap from analysis to synthesis, from clue to hypothesis, from a seeming normality to the perception of a hidden crime with a swift accuracy that left me, despite his painstaking training, always bewildered. In this case he had some reason for interest beyond the ordinary. Old Mr. Arbuthnot of the Foreign Office had sat in this room only yesterday.

"My dear Sebright," he said, in a tone that made that gentleman look up, "are you quite sure?"

Sebright nodded again, this time more emphatically.

"Sure," he replied, still professionally nonchalant. "Saw him myself."

"I mean—are you sure he shot himself?"

Sebright stared at him.

"No doubt about it. One of his clerks was passing along the corridor—heard a detonation in his room—opened the door and rushed in—and there was Arbuthnot collapsed in his chair at his desk—bullet-wound through the side of his head—his

Copyright, 1924, by F. Britten Austin.

own revolver lying on the floor, just as it had fallen from his hand. The clerk gave the alarm at once, of course. I was sent for—found nothing had been touched—clear case of suicide. The coroner's inquest may throw some light on the motive—no one at the F.O. could suggest any." He gave these details with a curt definiteness, finally disposing of a question that held no further interest for him.

The Chief pondered a moment.

"On which side of the head was the death-wound, Sebright?"

"The right-hand side, of course."

"You're certain of that?"

"Quite. You know his room—when you come in from the corridor, his desk is just to the left of you and he sits with his back to the door, facing the window. The wound was on the side of the head visible as you come in—I remember seeing it at once, and accidentally kicking with my foot the revolver lying on the floor. It was the normal right-hand side, right enough."

"H'm!" Q. Q. grunted. "But not normal for Arbuthnot. He happened to be left-handed. It didn't occur to you to make inquiries on that point, I suppose?"

"Of course it didn't. People aren't usually left-handed."

Sebright stared, startled, at Mr. Quayne as he made the admission. "Why, you are not suggesting——?"

"Murder." Q. Q. uttered the word with a grimly succinct finality.

"But why——?" Sebright still stared at him out of a sudden chaos of previously settled convictions. "What makes you jump to this conclusion? Who should want to murder poor old Arbuthnot?"

"My dear Sebright," Q. Q.'s tight lips twisted in a faint smile, "only yesterday Arbuthnot sat in that chair. He had come to see me—privately—unofficially—and he was very much troubled. He was convinced that there was a leakage of secret information from his department. Arbuthnot was a queer old fellow, as you know. His one hobby, I believe, was the solution of acrostics and ciphers. He used to read solemnly through the agony column of *The Times* every evening after work and puzzle out the code-messages of all the illicit lovers who communicate through that medium. The evening before he came to me he had had a shock. One of the messages he decoded conveyed to someone unknown a piece of highly secret information that could only have emanated from his department. The poor old boy was in a terrible state—he did not want to go to his Chief with the news until he could at the same time indicate the culprit—he was, of course, like most Civil Servants in a senior position, extremely sensitive to the honour of his department—it was heart-breaking to him to think it should be indiscriminately disgraced. He came to me for advice. He was to have called again to-day."

"Phew!" exclaimed Sebright, thoroughly perturbed. "This makes everything look different. I wish to Heaven he had come to see me about it at once. I hate these stories at second-hand—I'd give a lot to hear him tell me all about it himself."

Q. Q. smiled quietly, rose from his chair. "He shall tell you, my dear Sebright. You shall hear, in his own voice, everything he told me—and we'll see what you make of it." He went across to a cabinet on the farther wall, opened a drawer, returned with a long black cylinder. "When a case is brought to me, I not infrequently allow my informant, unknown to himself, to tell it to the detectaphone at the same time. I have found, more than once, a help to elucidation in listening to it repeated, precisely as it was originally told, when I am sitting here undistracted by his personal presence. One can have the vital points reiterated over and over again *ad libitum*." He sat down to his comfortably large desk, slipped the cylinder into a concealed slot, pressed a button which uncovered a long aperture in the side of the desk towards the room, pressed another button. There was a faint whir of a mechanism started into activity, and then:—

"*One of my clerks must have taken an impression of my key*——"

It was the voice—almost startlingly recognizable to me as I sat quietly at my own desk at the other side of the room—of Mr. Arbuthnot. It evoked immediately for me the image of that large-built man with a little pointed grey beard who had, only yesterday, sat in the chair where Sebright was now sitting. Sebright jumped involuntarily.

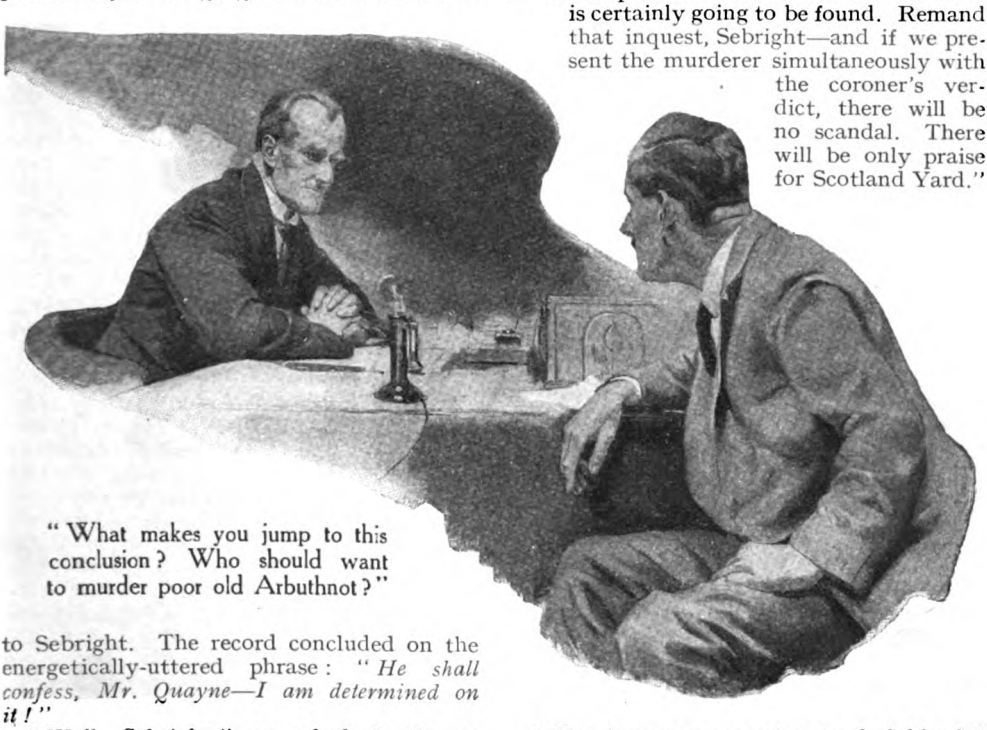
"My God, Q. Q.," he said, "it's uncanny to hear him like that! Just as if he were still here!"

Q. Q. smiled quietly as he bent down to the cylinder.

"The needle wasn't quite at the commencement," he said. "We'll let him tell his story again from the beginning." He made the necessary adjustment.

It was indeed uncanny—even to me, accustomed to hear such repetitions from the detectaphone (Q. Q. did not use the usual ear-pieces; he had installed a loud-speaker to which he could listen while he paced up and down the room)—to listen to that dead man's voice repeated with life-like accuracy in that still room. It was a deep, solemn, booming voice, a voice that would have made a bishop of its owner had he been a

parson, a voice that came vibrant with natural authority. And that voice told the story all over again, precisely as I had heard it the day before from the man's living presence, just as Q. Q. had summarized it to Sebright. The record concluded on the energetically-uttered phrase: "*He shall confess, Mr. Quayne—I am determined on it!*"



"What makes you jump to this conclusion? Who should want to murder poor old Arbuthnot?"

"Well, Sebright," remarked Q. Q., as he stopped the mechanism, "what do you make of it? You have heard Arbuthnot's own voice."

"I don't want to hear it again," said Sebright, with a shudder. "Shut the thing off. It gives me the creeps. Remember, I saw that man lying dead this morning."

"Practise that imagination of yours, Sebright," commented the Chief, with his grim smile. "It's essential in this detective business. Well, what are you going to do on this information? Anything?"

Sebright was thoughtful for a moment, evidently reluctant to open up again a matter on which he had publicly pronounced his official dictum.

"Of course," he said, "Arbuthnot might still have committed suicide—in the distress, the sense of disgrace to his department, caused by his discovery."

"Do left-handed men usually shoot themselves on the right-hand side of the head, Sebright?" asked Q. Q., quietly. "I knew Arbuthnot very well indeed. I am prepared to ask that question at the coroner's inquest."

"That means a public scandal, Quayne—a lot of unwelcome limelight on the F.O."

"I dislike private scandals even more," said the Chief. "I regarded Arbuthnot as an old personal friend—and his murderer is certainly going to be found. Remand that inquest, Sebright—and if we present the murderer simultaneously with the coroner's verdict, there will be no scandal. There will be only praise for Scotland Yard."

"But how are we going to find him?" challenged Sebright, in exasperation. "There's not the slightest clue. The revolver is admittedly Arbuthnot's own—one he kept in his desk. The clerk who burst into the room immediately after the detonation found no one but the dead man."

"Who was that clerk?"

"Oglethorpe—the next senior to Arbuthnot. He was passing along the corridor—or so he says." Sebright stopped. "Of course, he might have——"

"What?"

Sebright was suddenly illumined with a theory. "Shot Arbuthnot with Arbuthnot's own revolver and dashed out into the corridor. There's no evidence, one way or the other. The corridor was empty. People in the vicinity heard the detonation, but before they could investigate it Oglethorpe ran into the room where the other clerks were sitting and told his story."

"H'm!" Q. Q. stroked his jutting chin. "I know Oglethorpe. How many clerks are there in Arbuthnot's personal department?"

"Six—including Oglethorpe."

"Do you happen to know if the other five were in the room when Oglethorpe entered it?"

"No. There were only three—it came out while I was questioning as to who had seen Arbuthnot that morning."

"Who were absent?"

"Johnson—he was away looking for a file in the Registry."

Q. Q. nodded.

"And the other man?"

"D'Arcy Vaughan—the next in seniority to Oglethorpe. He was out at lunch."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite. He went to lunch at twelve o'clock as usual. The tragedy occurred at ten minutes past. I saw him when he returned—gave him the first news of it. No, Q. Q.!" Sebright thumped his fist on his knee in emphasis, "if Arbuthnot was murdered—it could only have been done by Oglethorpe!"

"Why?" Q. Q. lifted his grey eyebrows.

"On his own showing, he dashed into that room immediately *after* the detonation. If the murderer were someone else, he must still have been there! He could not possibly have got away."

"H'm!" Q. Q. grunted. "I know Arbuthnot's room pretty well. I seem to remember that it has a large cupboard where Arbuthnot used to hang his overcoat. Allow yourself to consider another hypothesis. The murderer, hearing Oglethorpe come to the door, might have slipped into that cupboard and dodged out again immediately Oglethorpe had gone to give the alarm."

"Might!" echoed Sebright, contemptuously. "All sorts of things *might* happen. I consider possibilities only after I've dealt with certainties. What is certain is that one of Arbuthnot's confidential clerks was passing out information; that Arbuthnot knew of it and was trying to discover the source of leakage—*did* discover it, perhaps; that Oglethorpe had, next to Arbuthnot himself, the easiest access to secret information; that if Arbuthnot was left-handed he did not shoot himself; and that Oglethorpe was admittedly in the room so soon after the murder that no murderer could have escaped from it—unless it were Oglethorpe himself, with his plausible story of hearing the shot while passing the door and then discovering the suicide." Sebright rose briskly to his feet. "I'm going to check up Mr. Oglethorpe a little, Q. Q.," he concluded. "And, unless my intuition is much at fault, Mr. Oglethorpe is going to sleep in a police cell to-night."

Q. Q. smiled at him.

"That intuition of yours is positively uncanny, Sebright," he said. "You may be quite right, of course. It may just as well be Oglethorpe as another. That it was one of Arbuthnot's own clerks who murdered him, I feel certain. Do you mind me doing a little investigation of my own? It won't conflict with yours, and I have a personal interest in the matter."

"You can do what you like—so long as you don't scare away the game," replied Sebright, magnanimously. He glanced at his watch. "I'm going to get busy—and I'll let you know directly I slip my handcuffs on the man."

Q. Q. smiled again.

"I'll do the same by you, Sebright," he said. "Well, the best of luck to you!"

THE moment the door had closed behind Sebright's back, the Chief took up the telephone, asked for a number.

"Hullo!—Yes.—Put me through to Mr. Oglethorpe, please.—Is that Mr. Oglethorpe speaking?—Good. This is Quentin Quayne—of the Q. Q. Agency. Could you manage to snatch a few minutes, Mr. Oglethorpe, and come round and see me here—Piccadilly Circus—as soon as possible? I should be immensely obliged to you.—Yes, it *is* urgent—very urgent, in fact.—Thank you—that's excellent."

The Chief put down the telephone, looked across to me.

"Coming at once. Oglethorpe knows me well enough to know that when I say 'urgent' it means urgent. Now I hope we shall learn something."

Perhaps ten quiet minutes elapsed—ten minutes in which Q. Q., after leaning back thoughtfully in his chair for a moment or two, bent forward to his desk and wrote rapidly a long single column of words on a sheet of paper—and then Mr. Oglethorpe was announced.

He came into the room, a thin, worried-looking man of about forty-five years of age, clean-shaven, a little bald, conventionally the higher grade Civil Servant in his morning-coat, dark trousers, and the silk hat courteously doffed as he entered, conventionally the Civil Servant too in his precise, somewhat pedantic manner. The Chief shook hands with him like an old acquaintance, indicated the chair close to his desk. Mr. Oglethorpe seated himself.

"You want to see me about this terrible business in the office, I suppose, Mr. Quayne?" he said.

"Exactly." Q. Q. smiled at him.

"I have worked with Arbuthnot for twenty years—and I should never have dreamed that he was the man to commit suicide!" exclaimed Mr. Oglethorpe, in a tone of genuine horror at the memory.

Q. Q. continued to smile as he looked

straight at his visitor, but there was no humour in that smile.

"Perhaps he did not commit suicide, Mr. Oglethorpe," he said, quietly.

Mr. Oglethorpe jumped in his chair.

"What? Did not commit suicide? What on earth do you mean, Mr. Quayne? It must have been suicide—why, I was in the room a fraction of a minute after his revolver went off—I heard it as I passed along the corridor. It couldn't—how could it?—have been anything else than suicide, incredible though it seems!" Mr. Oglethorpe was a picture of puzzled bewilderment—the implication in Q. Q.'s words was plain enough.

"Well, Mr. Oglethorpe," the Chief spoke in his smoothest tones, "there *is* a little doubt about it—for reasons which I will not go into. Will you just tell me all you know of the tragedy?"

Mr. Oglethorpe told his story quite clearly and definitely, just as we had heard it already from Sebright. He was coming along the corridor from another department at ten past twelve when he heard the shot. He had rushed into the room. Arbuthnot was there alone, lying back in his chair, a wound in the right side of his head. Horrified, he had dashed off to give the alarm. Yes—of course he knew the cupboard in Arbuthnot's room—he could not say whether the door of it was open or shut—he hadn't given a thought to it. He had seen no one in the corridor, before or after the tragedy.

Q. Q. nodded gravely as he finished.

"Well, Mr. Oglethorpe, there is a possibility—I don't want to enlarge upon it—that Arbuthnot was murdered by one of the clerks in his own department."

"Impossible!" Mr. Oglethorpe was emphatic, all his instincts outraged. "It is a monstrously absurd suggestion, Mr. Quayne, one that—as the temporary acting head of the department and in view of the plain facts—I cannot but resent!"

"Nevertheless, Mr. Oglethorpe, it is a suggestion that has been made—and one that I am bound to probe. You would, of course, do all you could to assist in finding poor Arbuthnot's murderer—assuming that he *was* murdered?"

"Of course I should. Though, I repeat, I can't for a moment believe it. What do you require of me?"

"I want to submit the six confidential clerks in your department to a little psychological test. It is one which—if I can trust the experience of the Viennese police, and sundry little efforts of my own—can scarcely fail in such circumstances. You have heard of the word-association method?"

"Something to do with psycho-analysis, isn't it? Sheer quackery, all of it, in my opinion." Mr. Oglethorpe let it be seen that he was old-fashioned and proud of it.

"Precisely," Q. Q. concurred, with a smile. "It is a method much used by psycho-analysts. I put a word to you. You answer as quickly as possible with the first word that rises in your mind in association. I measure the time-interval, in each case, between my question and your answer. In my list of words are one or two which have a direct bearing upon the case. When those words are put to the concealed criminal, he instantly recognizes their danger and instinctively—no matter what his command of himself—hesitates for a safe word to give in answer. It is quite automatic on his part. And accordingly, to those key-words his time-interval of association will show as appreciably longer than his average. Now, I want you to have the goodness to send your clerks across to me, one by one, this afternoon, Mr. Oglethorpe—and since I want to get as wide a basis as possible for my averages, I should be very glad if you would commence with yourself now."

"I haven't the slightest faith in any of this psycho-analytic charlatanry," said Mr. Oglethorpe, with a superior note of condescending disdain in his voice, "but if you think it will help you, go ahead by all means. Fire away—I'm ready."

Q. Q. drew his sheet of paper in front of him, sat with pencil-point poised.

"*Bread!*" he said, and his pencil-point commenced to dot across the paper.

"*Butter!*" answered Mr. Oglethorpe, promptly. Q. Q. stopped dotting at his first syllable, scribbled the word rapidly.

"*Sea!*" dot-dot.

"*Ship!*"

"*Horse!*" dot-dot.

"*Cart!*"

"*House!*" dot-dot-dot.

"*Room!*"

"*Desk!*" dot-dot-dot-dot.

"*Chair!*"

"*Table!*" dot-dot-dot.

"*Cloth!*"

"*Cupboard!*" dot-dot-dot.

"*Bone!*" Mr. Oglethorpe gave the answer, an obvious nursery-rhyme memory, almost desperately. The strain of keeping his brain alert he evidently found more difficult than he had anticipated. Q. Q. scribbled down each answer as it was given.

"*Carpet!*" dot-dot.

"*Floor!*"

And so on through a list of about fifty words where, at intervals, I remarked only "*code*," "*revolver*," and "*murder*" as specially significant.

When he had got to the end, Q. Q. looked up with his quiet smile.

"Thank you, Mr. Oglethorpe," he said—it was impossible to deduce whether or not he had detected any grounds for suspicion in that rapid quasi-schoolchild examination—"I am much obliged by your complaisance. And now will you carry it to the length of sending along your clerks, one by one, in order, let us say, of their seniority?"

Mr. Oglethorpe departed. Q. Q. did not address a word to me in the interval while we waited for the appearance of the next clerk from Arbuthnot's office. I busied myself on the routine task before me. Q. Q. leaned back in his chair, finger-tips together, frowning in a concentration of thought beyond my guesses.

Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan was announced. He was a younger man than Mr. Oglethorpe, struck a more modern note of smartly-tailored, keen-edged efficiency. The little dark moustache on his good-looking face was neatly trimmed, his monocle gave him a touch of aristocratic differentiation from the usual office-worn type, his manner had the self-confident ease produced by the best of public-schools and the 'Varsity. He smiled affably—with, however, a Foreign Office consciousness of personal dignity—as he approached the Chief.

"Oglethorpe tells me you want to see me about poor Arbuthnot's death, Mr. Quayne." He sank easily and comfortably into the chair Q. Q. indicated to him. "Anything I can do, of course"—he made a gesture of perfect readiness to oblige—"but I'm afraid that's not much."

Q. Q.'s quiet eyes were summing him up.

"So I understand. You were at lunch, I believe, when the tragedy occurred?"

"Yes. I knew nothing about it until I returned and the Scotland Yard fellow told me. It was a shock to me, of course, as it was to everyone else. Poor old fellow! One would never have suspected a suicidal streak in him—some private worry, perhaps."

Q. Q. caressed his chin.

"Did Mr. Oglethorpe tell you precisely why I wanted to see you, Mr. Vaughan?"

"No. He merely said that you wished to talk to me on the matter."

Q. Q. nodded.

"Then I will tell you, Mr. Vaughan—and perhaps it would be as well if you regarded it as in confidence. There is reason to suspect that Mr. Arbuthnot did not commit suicide—but that he was shot by one of the clerks in his personal department—a clerk who had an urgent motive to suppress him promptly."

His eyes were fixed on Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan as he spoke, but Mr. Vaughan manifested only the startled vivification of interest normal in such circumstances.

"You mean—*murdered?*" he gasped.

"I mean murdered." The Chief was impressively specific.

"But—my dear sir"—Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan was obviously much perturbed—"it seems to me fantastic. Oglethorpe almost saw him shoot himself—he was in the room a moment later—before any murderer could have escaped." He paused for a look of utter incredulity at Q. Q. "What grounds have you for such a wildly improbable theory? Who could possibly have shot Arbuthnot—unless Oglethorpe did it himself—which is grotesquely absurd."

"That is what we are going to try and find out, Mr. Vaughan," replied the Chief, quietly. "I'm sure I can call upon you to give me any assistance in your power?"

"Certainly—certainly," said Mr. Vaughan, "of course. But what do you want me to do?"

"I'll explain." And Q. Q. explained to him, precisely as he had explained to Mr. Oglethorpe, the psychological test he proposed to apply to the six clerks. Mr. Vaughan accepted it unhesitatingly. "Of course, there must be no exceptions," he said. "Obviously."

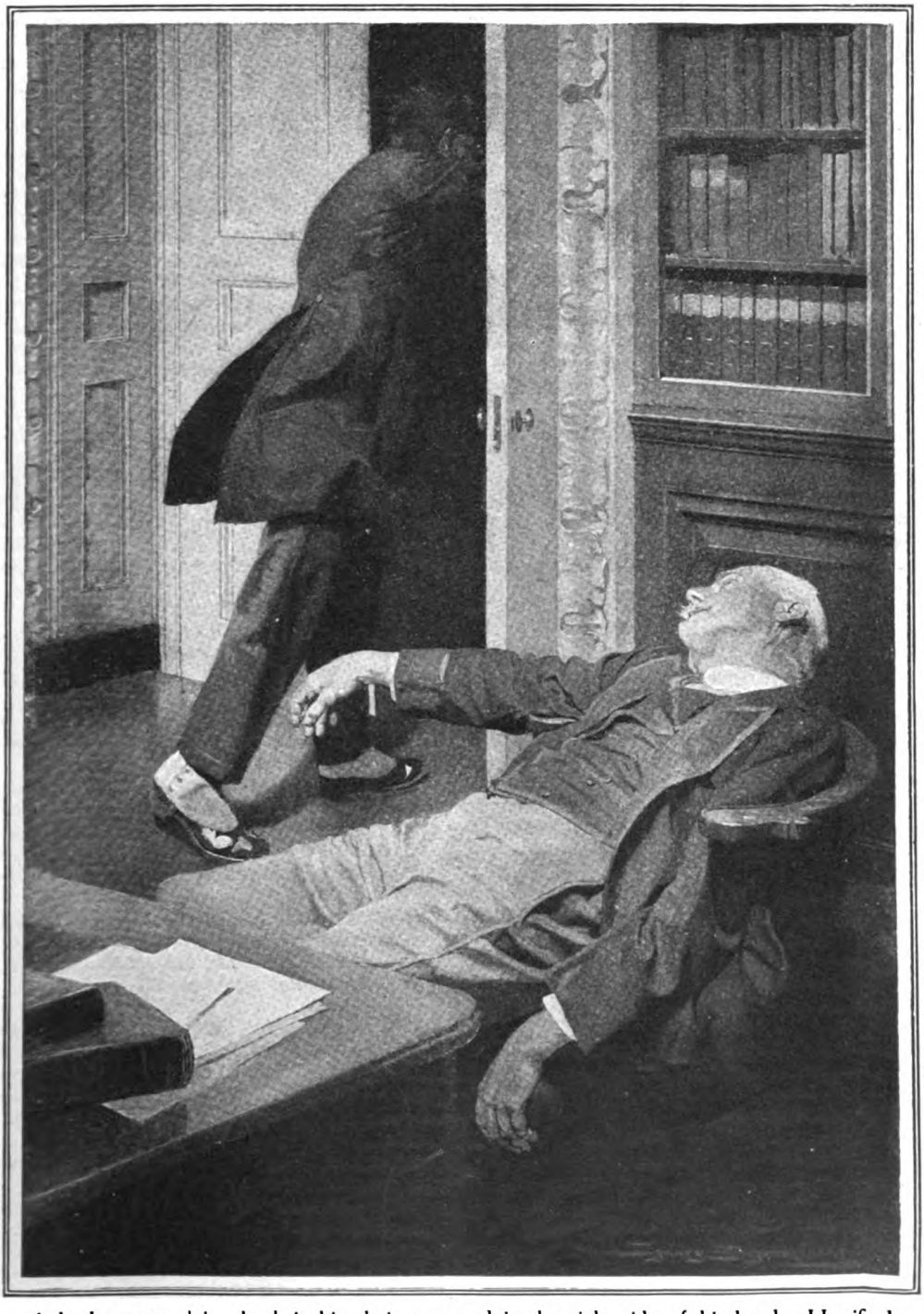
ONCE more Q. Q. pronounced his list of words, dotted down the time-interval before the associated word came in answer. Mr. Vaughan replied to all with—so far as I could tell—an equally prompt rapidity. He was plainly a quick-brained, highly intelligent fellow.

"Thank you, Mr. Vaughan," said Q. Q., when he had finished. Again it was impossible for me to guess, through his quiet normality of tone and feature, whether or not he had discovered the clue he sought for.

Three more clerks followed in due course and succession—Mr. Wainwright, Mr. Turner, and Mr. Billmore. All three of them were most improbable murderers, for all three—Q. Q. checked their answers one against the other—had been in their office all the morning, had not left it on any pretext until Mr. Oglethorpe had rushed in with the news of Arbuthnot's suicide. Nevertheless, all three of them submitted to the test—and Q. Q. remained quietly smiling and inscrutable as they were successively dismissed.

The next—and last—to present himself was the junior, Mr. Johnson, a tall, nervous, but pleasant-looking lad, scarcely in his twenties.

"Sit down, Mr. Johnson," said Q. Q., smiling at him and indicating the chair in which Johnson's predecessors had sat. "You were in the Registry at the time the tragedy occurred this morning?"



Arbuthnot was lying back in his chair, a wound in the right side of his head. Horrified, Oglethorpe had dashed off to give the alarm.

" Yes, sir." The boy submitted easily to the quiet authority which emanated from Q. Q.'s personality. " I was searching for a file that had been mislaid."

" Between what times—precisely ? "

" It was a little before ten to twelve when I left my room, sir. I returned at twenty minutes past." The lad was obviously nervous. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue before he spoke.

" So from ten to twelve to nearly twenty past you were in the Registry ? "

" Yes, sir."

Q. Q. looked at him penetratingly from under his heavy grey eyebrows.

" Very well. It is necessary for me to check all the statements I receive. I will just ring up the Registry and get them to confirm those times." He reached for the telephone.

" Don't do that, sir ! " The lad had half-sprung from his chair.

" Why ? "

" I did not tell you the truth, sir." I saw perspiration on the boy's brow, once more his tongue moistened his lips. He turned away his eyes from Q. Q.'s piercing scrutiny.

" Then please tell me the truth now."

" Yes, sir. I—I did not go straight to the Registry. I slipped out of the building."

" Out of the building ? Why ? "

" To send a telegram—at the post-office across the road in Parliament Street."

" To whom did you send that telegram ? "

" I—I'd rather not say, sir."

Q. Q. frowned. I felt suddenly sorry for that lad, horrifyingly suspicious though were the circumstances that so suddenly gathered about him.

" JOHNSON ! " The Chief's voice was sharply stern—a voice it was impossible not to obey. " You will tell me at once to whom you sent that telegram."

The lad hesitated miserably. I saw his hands clench and unclench themselves, his face go white.

" It was to a moneylender, sir," he burst out after a moment when his voice seemed to have refused to function.

" A moneylender ? "

" Yes—yes, sir. I—I wanted to keep it a secret. He was threatening to denounce me to my Chiefs if I did not pay to-day—you know what that would have meant, sir ? " The boy spoke hurriedly now, imploringly. " I had written to my sister, telling her all about it. At a quarter to twelve I received a telegram from her—saying she would help me. Here it is, sir." The lad fished out a crumpled telegram from his pocket, held it out to Q. Q., who took it without removing his eyes from the soul under their scrutiny. " I dashed across to the post-office to send a telegram to him telling him that my sister was paying—to take no action." The lad stopped breathlessly, his eyes miserably on Q. Q.'s inscrutable face.

The Chief glanced at the telegram in his hand.

" This is not very explicit," he said. " It merely says ' All right, Vera.' That might mean anything. Do you grasp the point of this questioning, Johnson ? "

" No—no, sir." The lad stuttered. " I—I don't think I do."

" The point is that Mr. Arbuthnot was murdered in his room at ten minutes past twelve. On your story, you left the building at ten minutes before the hour. Where were you at ten minutes past ? "

" In the post-office, sir."

" From ten minutes to the hour to ten minutes past ? Twenty minutes ? "

" I had to wait in a queue, sir."

" And then you returned to the Registry ? "

" Yes, sir. I took the file I said I wanted, and went back to my room. It was then I first heard the news about poor Mr. Arbuthnot, sir."

" H'm ! Well, the post-office records will prove the truth of your statements. Your telegram will note the time it was handed in. You say that was ten past ? "

" No, sir. The telegram was handed in at a quarter past. At ten past I was still waiting in the queue."

" Quarter past ? How long, Johnson, did it actually take you to run down from the corridor where your room is situated to the post-office ? "

" Under two minutes, sir."

" And you are sure—*quite sure*—that it was at ten minutes to the hour, and not just after *ten minutes past*, that you ran to the post-office ? " The implication in that question was terribly obvious.

" Yes, sir."

" Well, I am going to test the truth of your story. Now, listen to me ! " And once more Q. Q. explained the method he was going to employ. " To answer is the only way of clearing yourself from the suspicion that now rests upon you," he said, severely.

" Yes, sir. But—believe me, sir—I know nothing about poor Mr. Arbuthnot's death—nothing—I swear to you, sir ! " The lad was evidently horribly alarmed. " I was in the post-office at the time, sir ! "

Q. Q.'s eyes probed him.

" Calm yourself, Mr. Johnson. And concentrate your mind on putting, as rapidly as possible, an associated word to the word I shall give you."

The boy gulped.

"*Bread!*" dot-dot-dot.

"*Butter!*" He forced himself to the strain of an answer, hit the natural association which all his predecessors had given.

"*Sea!*" dot-dot.

"*Shore!*"

"*Horse!*" dot-dot-dot-dot.

"*Hoof!*"

Q. Q. took him right through the list, dotting the intervals of his hesitations, scribbling down his replies. The lad answered irregularly, spasmodically, a perspiration of distress upon his forehead, a look of terror in the eyes that stared as though hypnotized at Q. Q. It was all he could do, evidently, to keep his mind to the focus of what was required of him, and some of his associations were wildly wide—desperately clutched at in his anxiety to give a reply not too long delayed.

The Chief finished his inquisition, examined the paper with the irregular rows of dots, the final answers, compared them with the records of the others.

"H'm!" he grunted, his face inscrutable.

The lad sat staring at him, his hands twitching, scarcely daring—it would seem—to breathe.

The telephone bell rang sharply. Q. Q. took up the instrument.

"Hullo?—Yes—Quayne speaking. Who's that?—Oh, Sebright?—What? You've got your man?—Who is it?—Oglethorpe?" Q. Q. smiled grimly. "Beware of those clear cases, Sebright. They're often only the mirror of your own ideas. I'm afraid you'll have to release Oglethorpe—with apologies. Yes. *Why?* Because I happen to have caught the man, and it isn't Oglethorpe. I'll hand him over to you presently. By the way, Sebright, where are you ringing up from?—The F.O.?—Good! Would you mind asking Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan to step round here again as soon as possible? I've something important to speak to him about. Thanks." Q. Q. put back the receiver.

Young Johnson had sprung to his feet, stood quivering while Q. Q. talked. I watched him narrowly, my muscles tense to leap on him should he offer a sudden violence. There was a wild look in his frightened eyes.

"I—I didn't do it, sir!" he stammered.

The Chief smiled at him.

"I know you didn't," he said.

The boy stared, bewildered.

"Then—then—why have you asked Mr. Vaughan to come here, sir? You're not going to—to tell him about that moneylender?" There was a new and scarcely less acute alarm in his face. "For God's sake, don't, sir! Mr. Vaughan would report me at once!"

The Chief smiled again, more kindly.

"Nor that either. This experience in dealing with moneylenders will suffice you for a lifetime, I trust. That's all I have to say to you, Mr. Johnson." He nodded in dismissal.

Young Johnson still could not quite grasp the situation.

"You mean—you don't want me any more, sir?"

"No. And if you should meet Mr. Vaughan on your way back to your office, say nothing to him. Good afternoon."

Q. Q. turned back to those enigmatic papers which held a secret that tantalized my curiosity to a sudden fever-pitch.

"Goo-good afternoon, sir!" The lad went out of that room, haunted for him with a dreadful ordeal, with a gladly-eager haste that was almost a flight.

WHEN he had gone, I looked across to the Chief.

"You've got your man, sir?"

Q. Q. glanced up at me, his face grimly satisfied in its expression.

"Yes."

"It looked bad for young Johnson, sir—and he seemed to stumble terribly when you applied your test." I was, of course, fishing, but it had in fact seemed to me more than once that the lad must be betraying himself, so desperate were his hesitations.

"Pooh! His time-intervals were of course wildly erratic—what one would expect from the strain he was undergoing—but on the key-words he was no more erratic than elsewhere. Now this record," he held up another sheet of paper, "is curiously regular—the shortest intervals of any—till we come to those same vital words. And then there is a sudden seventy-five to a hundred per cent. increase—almost imperceptible while he spoke, but evident enough here. Moreover, automatically in his first quickness he gave the curious association '*hide*' to the word '*cupboard*'—the only one to do so; after that, recognizing his slip, he was on his guard—a little too much on his guard." He chuckled with satisfaction. "That's the man, Mr. Creighton!"

"Which man, sir?"

"Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan."

"D'Arcy Vaughan!" I echoed the name in astonishment. Mr. Vaughan had seemed to me the most normal of any of those six men who had sat in that chair—his answers unvarying in their glib rapidity. "And—you're going to arrest him, sir—directly he comes in?" I thrilled with the sense of imminent crisis.

"Not quite as soon as that, Mr. Creighton. What I have here is evidence enough for myself. But it is not legal evidence. I'm going to get that legal evidence. I'm going

to get a signed confession." His tone was curt with a confidence I did not share.

"D'Arcy Vaughan—if he's the man, sir—doesn't seem to me the sort of fellow to give confessions easily," I ventured. "He must have immense nerve to behave as he did in this office."

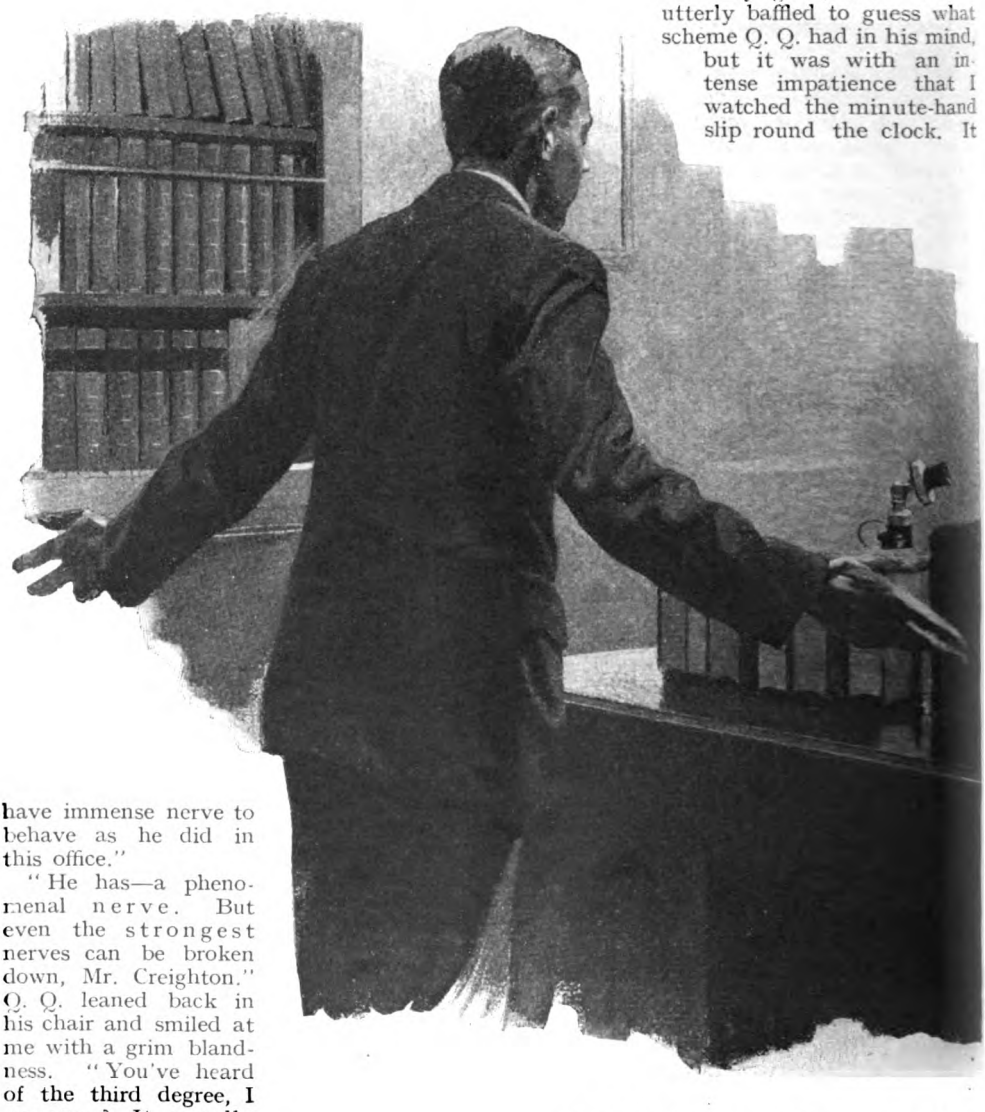
"He has—a phenomenal nerve. But even the strongest nerves can be broken down, Mr. Creighton." Q. Q. leaned back in his chair and smiled at me with a grim blandness. "You've heard of the third degree, I suppose? It usually implies some physical pain to the prisoner under examination. We're a little too civilized for that. I'm going to put Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan through what we may call the fourth degree—considerably more subtle and quite as efficacious."

"I don't understand, sir. Do I come in this?"

"You, Mr. Creighton, will merely quietly get up and lock that door behind Mr. Vaughan when he enters, and then you will return to your desk and get on with your work in absolute silence. You will not utter a word, unless I speak to you."

"Very good, sir." I was utterly baffled to guess what scheme Q. Q. had in his mind, but it was with an intense impatience that I watched the minute-hand slip round the clock. It was close on five. Perhaps Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan would after all smell a rat—not come? A feverish anxiety for his appearance mounted in me, obscured the petty routine task on which I was engaged.

The office telephone-bell rang, startling me in the tension of my nerves. The Chief answered it.

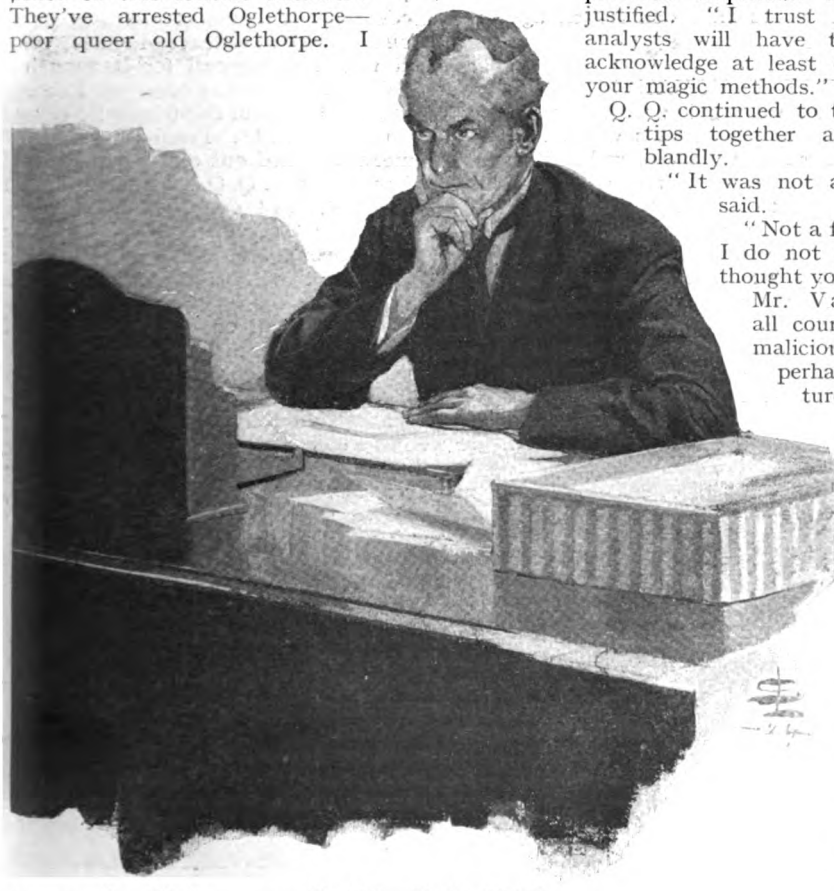


"I—I didn't do it, sir!" young Johnson

"Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan? Show him in, please." From his tone he might have been admitting the most casual of visitors, but he smiled—a smile of intimate satisfaction—at me as he put back the receiver.

The door opened. Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan, sprucely elegant, his monocle in place, his good-looking features happily serene, entered the room. I rose, went unobtrusively behind him, locked the door, returned to my place. Mr. Vaughan advanced towards Q. Q.

"Well, Mr. Quayne," he said, in a voice that struck me as oddly cheerful for a man whose office had been the scene of such tragic events, "you've heard what has happened in this terrible business? They've arrested Oglethorpe—poor queer old Oglethorpe. I



stammered. "I know you didn't," said the Chief.

would never have believed it possible, but Scotland Yard seems quite certain—and it knows its business, I suppose. Awful!—terrible!—terrible!"

"Yes, I had heard," replied Q. Q., coolly.

Mr. Vaughan sat down in the chair, carefully deposited his glossy silk hat on a corner of Q. Q.'s desk, and casually crossed one nicely-creased trouser-leg over the other. If he were indeed the man, I could not but admire his perfect *aplomb*.

"And now, Mr. Quayne," he said, "before we come to whatever you want to see me about, there's a little thing I'm curious to know. Did the results of your psycho-analytic test by any chance coincide with those of the police?"

Q. Q. leaned back in his chair, tapped his finger-tips together.

"No," he replied, "they did not."

Mr. Vaughan smiled.

"Ah?" His tone politely indicated a previous scepticism that was now justified. "I trust you psycho-analysts will have the grace to acknowledge at least one failure of your magic methods."

Q. Q. continued to tap his finger-tips together as he smiled blandly.

"It was not a failure," he said.

"Not a failure? But—I do not understand—I thought you said——?" Mr. Vaughan was all courtesy, a rather malicious courtesy, perhaps, in a gestured sketch of baffled comprehension. He smiled frankly, pleasantly, at his interlocutor.

"It was not a failure." Q. Q. had spoken these words in the quietest, most dulcet of his tones. He rose from his chair, stood erect, spoke in a voice that to me seemed like a thunder-clap in its sudden stern vehemence. "*Own up, Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan!* You're caught out!"

The man had sprung up from his chair also, in an indignation that, whether real or simulated, was impressive in its apparent authenticity.

"What do you mean?" His voice

quivered, but it was with anger. "What are you trying to suggest?"

"I am suggesting, Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan," Q. Q.'s tone was sharply explicit, "that you are a spy in your own department, that you were betraying official secrets, that Mr. Arbuthnot detected you, called you into his room this morning as you passed on your way to lunch and taxed you with it, that he had the imprudence, perhaps, to threaten you—possibly in self-defence—with his revolver during the altercation, that you seized that revolver and shot him dead, that hearing someone come to the door you then sprang into the clothes-cupboard and dodged out again directly the coast was clear. Is that definite enough for you?"

MR. D'ARCY VAUGHAN looked as though he were going to strike his accuser in the face. I saw his fists clench, the lips go blanched under his little dark moustache. His eyes flashed—the monocle dropped to dangle on its thread. He mastered himself with an effort.

"Mr. Quayne, if you were a younger man, I would thrash you for this outrageous imputation!" He gasped in his wrath. "As it is, you have chosen to utter this monstrous slander before a witness." He jerked his hand in my direction. "You shall hear from my solicitors!" He strode towards the door.

Fascinated, I watched him as he reached it, tugged at the handle, twisted it in vain. Then he swung round again, his face ablaze with fury.

"Open that door at once!" he cried. "What does this mean?"

"It means, Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan," said Q. Q., in his most coldly level tones, "that you are a prisoner in this room until such time as you dictate and sign your confession."

The man glared at him, livid. He could scarcely speak in the rage which choked him.

"This is an outrage—a monstrous outrage! You dare, Mr. Quayne—*you dare* to subject a Civil Servant of my standing to this gross indignity! To illegal detention! Have a care, Mr. Quayne! You are laying yourself open to an action which I will fight through court after court till I ruin you!"

Q. Q. smiled grimly.

"You may have another case to fight in the courts before that, Mr. Vaughan. It is useless to wrestle with that door. You cannot open it."

Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan had once more switched round to the door, was tugging at it, twisting at the handle in an almost maniacal fury of anger. He faced round again to Q. Q.

"Open it, I say! Open it!" he choked; "or——!"

"Or nothing, Mr. Vaughan." Q. Q. was smoothly unruffled. "You will do nothing. You will merely in due course, when you are tired of raging at that door, sit down in that chair and dictate your confession." With which Q. Q. himself calmly resumed his seat, picked up a paper on his desk, and apparently gave it his undivided cool attention.

Mr. Vaughan stared at him for a moment, the muscles of his face twitching, his eyes murderous if ever a man's were—and then he strode straight across to me.

"*You!*" The violence in his voice startled me, half-prepared for it though I was. "Open that door at once—or I charge you as an accomplice in this felony! Felony!—you understand? Penal servitude!" Ugly menace looked out of him. I gripped myself, remembered Q. Q.'s orders, remained stolidly silent, bent over my work again. "*Do you hear?*" My shoulder was violently shaken. "Open that door, or——!" He had no threat vicious enough for his anger.

I glanced at him as coolly as I could—saw the ferocity in his glare, saw his fingers working—itching for a weapon which, thank Heaven, he did not possess—and remained dumb. Not only dumb, but, as well as I could feign it, deaf. Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan, I could see in the instant before my eyes went down to my work again, could have screamed blasphemies in the extremity of his exasperation. The uncanny completeness of our silence sent a gleam of fright into his eyes. Then once more they went impotently murderous. I guessed, even as with an effort of self-command I turned my gaze away from him, that he was speculating whether he would have a chance in a hand-to-hand mix-up with the pair of us.

Apparently he decided that he would not. I felt him remove his presence from over me, glanced up discreetly to see him once more in the centre of the room, facing the Chief.

"Mr. Quayne!" He controlled his voice to a harsh similitude of normality. "Do you mean that you have the insane intention of keeping me a prisoner in this room until I sign a confession of a murder of which I know nothing?"

Q. Q. raised his eyes to him as though only just again aware of his presence.

"You are begging the question, Mr. Vaughan," he said, quietly, turning over a page of his papers while he spoke. "I have all the relevant information. I require only

your confession. And it is certainly my intention to keep you here till I get it."

Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan achieved a short, scornful laugh.

"Very well," he said. "We shall see who can wait longest." He flung himself into the chair, sat tapping with his foot upon the floor. "You yourselves cannot sit for ever in this room. And when we leave it, Mr. Quayne, believe me, you shall rue this outrage."

Mr. Quayne merely turned over another page of the document he was perusing with such concentrated attention.

His victim glared at him, opened his cigarette-case—I noticed, maliciously, that it contained only one cigarette—struck a match, commenced to smoke. The silence of that room, high above the neighbouring house-tops, was like the grave. It perpetuated itself, continued until even I felt it a strain upon my nerves. The only sound was the deep breathing of that man in the chair adjacent to Q. Q.'s desk. Unobtrusively, I kept a sharp eye upon him, alert to interpose in that sudden panther-spring I felt to be imminent. But none came. And the silence in that room continued, persisted till it seemed to ring in my ears.

I glanced at the clock-hand. It marked half-past five.

Mr. Vaughan stirred.

"Mr. Quayne!"

Q. Q. lifted an eyebrow at him.

"How long is this madness to continue?"

"Until I get your confession." Q. Q.'s tone was quietly acceptive of the situation, was, without the faintest impatience, coolly confident of the final result.

"Psha!" The man jumped up from his chair again, strode once more across to me, evidently on the impulse to make another trial of my subordinate resolution. I forced myself to remain unperceptive of his presence. I heard his soft footfalls on the carpet recede away to the centre of the room, heard them go towards Q. Q.'s desk, heard the sudden creak of his chair as he flung himself down into it again.

When, discreetly, I glanced up, I saw him sitting there, his fingers drumming on his knees, the cigarette short between his lips, glowing in a momentary forgetfulness of economy.

THE silence continued. The ticking of the clock became insistent, an obsession to the ear. Its hands slipped round—six o'clock—quarter past. Outside, the light began to die out of the sky. Within the room there were already shadows. Long ago Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan had got to the end of his smoke. For what seemed an age he had sat like a statue, utterly motionless. What was he thinking? I wondered. And still the silence remained unbroken.

It was shattered suddenly.

"Quayne!" The man paused, waiting for a movement of Q. Q.'s head that did not occur. "I don't know how long this farce is going on—but I'll count it as mitigation if you'll give me a cigarette."

But Mr. Quayne had apparently lost the sense of hearing. He merely picked another from the pile of documents at his hand.

Once more the room relapsed into silence—into a silence that grew haunted, terrifying, vibrant with mysterious, unuttered menace as the twilight deepened in the room—a silence that *rang* and yet was soundless. A sudden mutter from the man in the chair seemed only to intensify it. How long indeed was this going on? I myself grew unnerved with the strain, felt the impulse to use my voice—to break this uncanny hush—rise up in me, almost irresistible. Had I been sitting there with the guilt of murder on my conscience, I could not have refrained from shouting it aloud to get relief at any cost from this intolerable ordeal of soundlessness, wherein the stark fundamental outlines of one's soul seemed automatically to emerge. I should have screamed that guilt, in hysteria, long ago. But still the man I could half-see in the gloom sat motionless and silent in his chair. Still Q. Q. remained, holding up a document to get the last of the light, seemingly oblivious of his presence. For myself, I had given up even the pretence of work. I sat, gripped in that dead hush, and waited—waited—while the shadows thickened. I could no longer see the hour upon the clock-face.

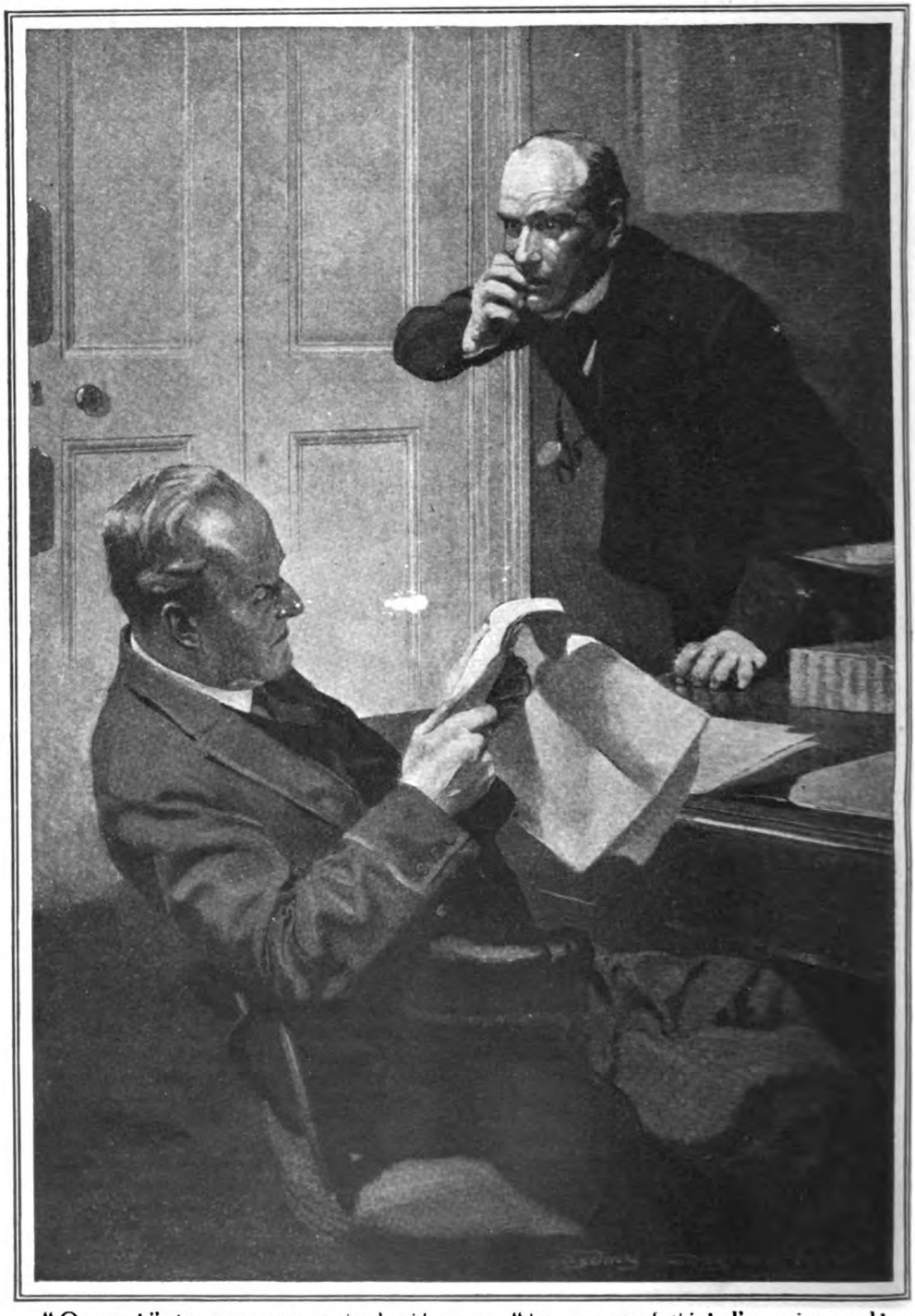
Suddenly I heard a sound—the faintest little whir—and then:—

"*He shall confess, Mr. Quayne—I am determined on it!*"

The voice came out of the gloom, solemn, deep-toned, vibrant with authority—the voice of the murdered Arbuthnot! Even to me, who could an instant later guess its source, it came with a shock to my nerves, uncanny from the formless shadows of the room. To the man in the chair it came with the full force of a supernatural presence—sternly inexorable in a ghostly omnipotence. He sprang to his feet, stood quivering.

"What was that? Quayne! Did you hear that? *Arbuthnot's voice!* I—I—no—it couldn't be!—it couldn't be! Quayne!" his voice was strained with terror, "let me out of this! I'm going mad! I can't stand it any longer!"

Q. Q. apparently did not hear him. He did not move. One hand still held the



"Quayne!" his voice was strained with terror, "let me out of this! I'm going mad! I can't stand it any longer!"

document up to the last glimmer of outside light, the other was out of sight beneath his desk. Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan gasped. Once more he turned towards me, and I saw his two hands go slowly, quiveringly, up towards his head as he stood silhouetted against the window. The man was gripped in a paroxysm of terror at those suddenly vocable shadows all around him—*at himself.*

"No," I heard him whisper to himself, "no! It couldn't have been! *It couldn't have been!*"

And then once more came that solemn, deep-toned, authoritative voice:—

"*He shall confess, Mr. Quayne—I am determined on it!*"

A gurgling choked scream broke from the tortured wretch.

"No! no! Quiet, Arbuthnot! *Quiet—for God's sake!* I—I can't bear it! I—I'll tell—I'll confess! I'll confess! Quayne! *Quayne!*" His voice came almost in a shriek from the shadows which hid his face. "I'll confess! I'll confess! Take it down—I'll confess!"

Q. Q. laid down his papers.

"Take down what Mr. Vaughan dictates, Mr. Creighton," he said, quietly. "Resume your chair, Mr. Vaughan." He touched the switch by his desk, and the room was suddenly flooded with light.

MR. D'ARCY VAUGHAN, no longer the spruce, well-groomed Civil Servant, but a haggard, wild-eyed wretch—I was startled at the havoc the ordeal had made in him—obeyed like a creature drained of volition, dropped heavily into his chair. I took up my pen and wrote as, quaveringly, gaspingly, the utterly unnerved, broken man began his confession. It was a confession of official secrets betrayed, sent by agony-column code-messages to a great foreign commercial organization to which they were of immense utility; of—precisely as Q. Q. had divined—Arbuthnot's having stopped him as he went along the corridor to his lunch, taxed him with it; of a wild alarm, a determination to suppress this danger at once; of the beginnings of a murderous struggle in which Arbuthnot had snatched the revolver from his drawer, of another snatch at that revolver which had seized it, of the sudden shot, of Oglethorpe at the door, of a spring into the clothes-cupboard, and a moment later—when Oglethorpe had dashed out again, horrified at the discovery—of a quick rush along the corridor, unobserved, to lunch.

Q. Q. listened, immobile, inscrutable, to the end.

"Now sign, Mr. Vaughan," he said, in his quiet, level voice.

The man got up from his chair, moved towards my desk—stopped suddenly.

"No!" he cried. Obviously, he made a great effort to pull himself together, to resume command of himself, seemed to succeed. "No! I won't sign!" He laughed like a maniac. "It's only your word against mine—both of you—and I'll swear it's a fabrication—a tissue of lies! I'm not going to sign away my life because you played a trick on me! How you did it, I don't know—but trick I'm sure it was!"

He stood, glowering defiance at Q. Q.

"As you like, Mr. Vaughan," said the Chief, quietly. "It makes really no difference whether you sign or not. Just listen a moment!" He bent forward, touched something on his desk. "Another little trick, Mr. Vaughan." He smiled pleasantly.

To my own astonishment there issued into the room, startlingly lifelike, Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan's voice in a recapitulated, word for word recital of his crime. The first few sentences of it were sufficient—Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan raised his hand. To his first amazement had succeeded a sudden bitterness of comprehension.

"That's enough," he said. "I don't want to hear it over again." He controlled his voice to a cynical appreciation. "A detectaphone, of course?"

"A double-barrelled one, Mr. Vaughan," said the Chief, still pleasantly. "With a blank record waiting for you."

He glared at Q. Q. in a sudden last flash of ferocity. "Curse you and your infernal cunning tricks!" he said. "All right—I may as well sign." He came across to my desk, scrawled a signature at the foot of the paper I presented to him, turned again with a snarl to the Chief. "Now what are you going to do?"

Q. Q. smiled grimly, took off the telephone receiver, asked for a number.

"Sebright?—Ah, Quayne speaking.—Just come round here, will you? I've got that man for you.—Yes. Signed confession. He's only waiting for your handcuffs." He put back the receiver.

Mr. D'Arcy Vaughan swayed on his feet, one hand feeling blindly for support at the edge of my desk.

"Mr. Quayne," he said, his eyes closed, "it would be Christian charity to give me a drink—brandy!"

He had finished my flask by the time Sebright arrived.

(*Next month: "The Adventure of the One-eyed Moor."*)

STORIES OF STATUES AND QUEER THINGS ABOUT THEM

By *Reginald Pound*

FOR a reason that appears never to have been thoroughly probed, it has become the fashion to make of our public statues a butt for a rather rugged wit and cynicism. An instance in point was afforded at the recent exhibition of the work of British architects of to-day, when, in his opening address, Lord Curzon of Kedleston said that, with regard to sculpture, those who walk about the streets of London and see the fare provided for them return home with feelings of profound depression, a remark which, according to the newspaper reports, was greeted with laughter. Here it may be noted that the magazine of the Society of Architects not long ago offered a prize for the best design for a "mausoleum and entrance gates to be erected in connection with the cemetery for London statues"! Like other folk, architects have their facetious moments; none the less is it true that underlying this amusing announcement there is a note of irony that marks the attitude of many, if not most of us, towards the statuary in our midst.

The statue of Charles I. at Charing Cross—the first equestrian monument to be erected in England—has a most romantic history.

But the fact is not at all commonly realized that, apart from its merits or defects as a work of art, every statue tells a story, and that while the sculptor may not have succeeded in bestowing distinction on his handiwork, accident or some other combination of circumstances may as likely as not have done so, frequently, it may be said, with interesting results.

You do not often pass the statue of Charles I., facing down Whitehall, one of the few really classical monuments of which we can boast, without seeing sightseers gazing up at the figure of the seemingly little king on the big horse. Some people are given to commenting scathingly on the size of the steed's neck—who ever, there often comes the question, saw a horse with a neck like that? Probably the advice, tendered here at the suggestion of a well-known animal sculptor, that the dubious spectator should forthwith visit Antwerp, where horses of an exactly similar type may be seen in real life, would not be followed. It may therefore be explained that Charles I.'s mount was of mixed Italian and Flemish ancestry, being descended from a pair given to Henry VIII. by the Marquis of Mantua. The mount was known as His Majesty's "great" horse, the name by which the breed was generally known in this country.

This statue, not many people are aware, was the first equestrian monument to be erected in England. It is the work of Hubert Le Sœur, and was intended to ornament the Roehampton grounds of Lord Treasurer Weston, though it never came into his possession. When Cromwell had disposed of the king, the order went forth that the statue should be broken up, a Covent Garden smith, named Rivett, being given the job. Rivett, an astute business man, hid it in a cellar, and, having faked—there seems no doubt—a great number of so-called relics of the effigy, did a roaring trade in souvenirs with the Royalists. At the Restoration the statue was reintroduced unharmed to the public gaze, being placed where it now stands—that is, on the site long ago occupied by the Eleanor Cross, an almost exact reproduction of

Stirrups, spurs, and saddle-girth are wanting in this equestrian statue of George IV.

which, by the way, is daily unrecognized by the thousands who pass through the yard of Charing Cross Railway Station. The Charles statue has lost one or two of its original features, notably the sword, which was stolen, it is said, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's state visit to open the Royal Exchange. By some chroniclers it is still asserted that the sculptor omitted the saddle-girth, a misbelief that has long persisted—there is, indeed, a tradition that, on discovering the omission, the sculptor was so dismayed that he committed suicide. The girth exists, however, although time and the weather have done much to deface it.

If in this instance the omission is fictitious, in others it is real enough. In the equestrian statue of George IV. in Trafalgar Square, the sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey, founder of the Chantrey Bequest, has curiously dispensed with stirrups and spurs, as well as the saddle-girth—not, let it be observed, from careless attention to detail, but because of his well-known dislike of ornament. This reason may doubtless be advanced with some justification in a number of instances of the kind, as, for example, in that of the statue of the Duke of Wellington at the Royal Exchange, which has neither spurs nor stirrups. Gladstone, in the Lobby of the House of Commons, has a seam missing from one trouser leg, an oversight which, I am assured, flouts the best traditions of Savile Row; while Sir Thomas Brock, in his colossal group fronting Buckingham Palace, has failed to achieve that degree of extreme accuracy which alone satisfies some critics by forgetting to provide Queen Victoria with a wedding-ring!

Anachronisms do not seem to have been perpetuated in stone or bronze or any other medium of the sculptor as they have been in paintings and, of course, films. But some curious mistakes exist to show that sculptors, like the rest of us, are anything but infallible. How comes

Why is Oliver Cromwell wearing his spurs upside down?

Why does the soldier in the War Memorial outside the Royal Exchange offend against King's Regulations by standing at ease with his hands covering the top of his rifle barrel?

it, one wonders, that Cromwell, in the famous effigy outside the House of Commons, is wearing his spurs upside down? What is the archer, decorating the west side of the New County Hall, Westminster, doing with his bow in the wrong hand? Why does the soldier in the War Memorial outside the Royal Exchange perpetually offend against King's Regulations by standing at ease with his hands covering the top of his rifle barrel, and why does the Prince Consort, in Holborn Circus, raise his hat in salute—a thing no self-respecting Field-Marshal ever did? There is an equestrian statue at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, of the first Duke of Westminster about to start out hawking—the sport, that is, not the kerbside occupation! The statue has been pronounced a good example of its kind, but experts in falconry point out one fault: the bird is carried on the wrong arm. And, since mention of a bird brings animals to mind, a friend who is a Fellow of the Zoological Society always waxes indignant, when passing through Trafalgar Square, on account of the unnatural posture of the famous lions. Lions, he insists, lie with their front paws turned inward; never placed flat to the ground, as these lions have them. The same observant and possibly captious authority recently pointed out—in lowered tones, for fear of bringing down on his head a charge of sacrilege by loitering nursemaids and their charges—that a squirrel on the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens has been endowed with rabbit's ears!

It was reported not long ago that a statue of Joan in France had been sadly mutilated by souvenir-hunters, who had chipped bits from the features and other parts of the figure. In this country our public effigies have, for good or ill, escaped a similar fate, though we are not entirely innocent in the matter. Three times in the long ago the head of the monument to Major André, who died as a spy in the American War of Independence, was appropriated from Westminster Abbey by some unknown person, although Charles Lamb seems to have had a suspicion that a craze for collecting was not the motive. He thought that the decapitation might have been the wanton mischief of some Westminster schoolboy, "fired, perhaps, with raw notions of transatlantic freedom." The mischief was done—he wrote to the poet Southey—"about the time that you were a scholar there. Do you know anything about the unfortunate relic?" Southey was annoyed, and some estrangement followed. The nose of William Camden, the

An archer at the New County Hall, Westminster, with his bow in the wrong hand.

antiquary, once disappeared, too, from the Abbey, a new nose being replaced by the University of Oxford. The join may still be seen.

The Cromwell statue, alluded to above, was at the time of its erection, which many will easily recall, threatened with worse than mere mutilation, although it emerged unscathed from the storm of feeling aroused by the decision to place it where it stands. The Earl of Hardwicke voiced a large section of public and political opinion when he urged that the statue should be erected in Dockland—"if Cromwell did any good at all, he did it in the cause of shipping and commerce." The upshot was that the projected public unveiling had to be cancelled, an official of the Office of Works performing the ceremony early one morning before London had rumbled into wakefulness!

Whether this statue should have been allowed to be unveiled at all is a question that agitates the public mind no longer. There are some statues that one feels should certainly never have seen the light of day, at least so far as artistic merit is concerned. Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, has in its midst an effigy that apparently well deserves the ridicule that historians have heaped on it. The story is that a former Governor of the island, Admiral Sir Robert Holmes, captured a Dutch ship carrying, besides gold from West Africa, a statue intended to commemorate the reigning French king, Louis XIV. The admiral, having examined his booty, conceived the brilliant notion of erecting a monument to himself, and, on landing, he had the king's head summarily struck off and a hastily-modelled representation of his own put in its place!

Another painfully inartistic effigy is that of George III. in the Register Office of Scotland, Edinburgh. Of colossal size, it is the work of a woman, Mrs. Damer, an eighteenth-century sculptor whose fame as an artist in this medium appears to have been largely the outcome of the fact that a woman sculptor in these days was a novelty, though in fairness it must be added that one or two examples of her work commended themselves to competent judges. Coming to modern times, more than one artist has decried the statue erected in his lifetime to Mr. Palmer, the biscuit king, of Reading. This gentleman is depicted, in bronze, carrying in his hand a silk hat and an umbrella. Personally, on seeing the monument for the first time I was struck by the absurdity of the pose. Mr. Palmer, no doubt, politely did remove his hat on entering the sculptor's studio, but there seems no excuse for crystallizing him as it were in the act, especially having in view the fact that the statue was destined for erection out of doors. It has been asserted, by the way, that this statue is the only one with an umbrella. I have discovered, as no doubt others have, another—the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow, in Waterlow Park, London. This brings to mind that the only instance in sculpture of eyeglasses actually being worn appears to be that of Sir Walter Besant, on the Embankment. A few hundred yards to the west Sir Wilfrid Lawson is shown with his pince-nez peeping from below his waistcoat.

One of the squirrels on the Peter Pan statue has been endowed with rabbit's ears.

The Prince Consort raising his hat in salute—a thing no Field-Marshal ever did.

The statue of George Washington in front of the National Gallery has excited a good deal of derision, although it ill becomes us to look a gift statue in the mouth. In this instance we may perhaps escape the charge by observing that the fault is not in the figure itself, but in a peculiar adjunct to it. Passing it a few days ago I overheard a sightseer pertinently ask, in a dialect that smacked of Yorkshire dales, why Washington is shown resting on a bundle of chimney-sweep's rods, a question that epitomizes the criticism generally levelled at this effigy. I have it on the authority of a famous sculptor that what to our English eyes looks exactly like a bundle of

sweep's implements is intended to represent the insignia of a Roman magistrate. Known as the fasces, the emblem to-day forms the badge of Fascismo. But as it is, Washington's statue is almost a comic affair.

The career of Queen Anne in statue form has been a somewhat chequered one. Of the origin of the statue of Her Majesty in Queen Anne's Gate nothing definite is known, but some authorities believe that it was put up early in the eighteenth century at the behest of William Paterson, whose fame rests on the greater accomplishment of founding the Bank of England. He it was who built Queen Anne's Gate, and his loyalty most probably found expression in erecting this statue to the Queen. For some unknown reason popular feeling was at one period directed against the statue. The children of the neighbourhood used to play a game in which they called the figure "Bloody Queen Mary," and when it failed to respond to their tauntings and challenges they pelted it with mud and stones.

London's other Queen Anne statue, that confronting St. Paul's Cathedral, the completion of which it was intended to signalize, suffered severely from Nature's disintegrating forces, and by 1885 it had become such an eyesore that it was removed, a faithful copy, the work of many hands, being erected in the following year. The original statue by Francis Bird found its way to a garden at St. Leonards-on-Sea, where, I believe, it is still. The fate of this statue has a curious parallel in that of the statue of Charles II. which formerly adorned Soho Square. This became such a weather-beaten relic that a few years ago it was removed, passing, after some negotiation, into the care of Sir W. S. Gilbert, the dramatist, at whose home near Harrow it found what will doubtless prove to be its last resting-place. One chronicler reports having seen it on a recent occasion half submerged in a pond in the garden.

Is Sir Walter Besant the only celebrity in sculpture shown wearing his glasses?

A curious history attaches to the statue of Sir Robert Peel in Parliament Square. Of bronze on a red granite pedestal, it is the work of Matthew Noble, who was obliged to cast two complete effigies before hitting the mark of Parliamentary appreciation with the present figure. The first was objected to as being too large for the site. A smaller one was cast and put up in 1868. A debate in Parliament followed, as a result of which the statue was removed, melted down, and cast again, the final unveiling taking place in 1876.

Why is George Washington shown resting on a bundle of chimney-sweep's rods? is a question that has been asked concerning this statue outside the National Gallery.

Reference has already been made to the Abbey statues, which are a fruitful study in themselves. There is a pretty anecdote concerning Roubiliac's statue of Handel. The composer's ear was modelled from that of a Miss Rich, a beauty of the day, and, it is likely, a relative of the theatre manager of that name. Asked why he had modelled a lady's ear for the statue, the sculptor replied that Handel's ear for music was so delicate that it could be adequately represented only by one that was small and elegant!

WATER

by

JOHN GALSWORTHY

ILLUSTRATED BY H. K. ELCOCK

I.

THE incomparable ramifications of London City were immersed in fog, yellow and tortuous, corkscrewing through closed windows and into the souls of men. But Henry Cursitor, absorbed in the need for floating the new debentures of the "Rangoon Wayside Water Works Trust," had resisted its influence steadily all day. Times were bad, but one would find the money. The British Empire—in a sense—depended on it; or, if not precisely the British Empire, at least the position of Henry Cursitor. The two phenomena had come to be inextricably involved for one, not so much corrupted by a weak idealism as accustomed to think in terms of an industrial development without which his occupation would be gone. Fellows with blue eyes upturned and shining were anathema to Henry Cursitor—their optimism had no sense of the immediate, which experience had told him was the only real obstacle to progress, including his own. Money was tight—heart-breakingly close and evasive. It seemed to enjoy playing with the hearts, nay the lives of those whose only wish was to water the soil of business and promote the steady flow of industry.

Since, a quarter of a century ago, his father's permanganate of potash works had offered Henry Cursitor, briefless barrister, a seat on the board, he had clung to direction, embarking on ship after ship and going down with them, simply owing to the tightness of money. It seemed to have a grudge against him for having so often got the better of it, for having raised it here and there, seen it earn handsome dividends and slowly slip into the deep, raised it again and set out on a fresh ship. "The Rangoon Wayside Water Works Trust" was not altogether a fresh ship; it had indeed been slowly sinking ever since the war; but it merely needed this fresh issue of debentures to plug its sides and fit it once more for the empyrean. In these cases the difficulty was always, of course, to frame the prospectus so as to find the money without concealing the truth that without the money the "Rangoon W.W.W.T." would nose-dive and carry Henry Cursitor down with it, this time possibly for good.

Before a sheet of foolscap, his hair smooth and dark, and his thin nose jutting, his eyes peaty and reflective—his mother had been a Furguson—his clean-shaven lips and cheeks ruddy in the yellow light, he sat still and rather bitter. One got little credit for doing one's job and keeping the flag flying. When he thought of the number of men who had ratted from the ships that had gone down with him, without even raising a finger to raise money, he felt something sacred in his own career. Never a lack of fair-weather fellows, of guinea-pigs, who, when it came to weathering the storm, left all to him! With a slow pen he traced the final paragraph: "These public utility works, soundly conceived, now need only the final touch of this small issue to place them firmly on a dividend-bearing basis. Carrying seven per cent. and secured on the whole property of the Trust, these preferred debentures constitute an exceptional investment. The directors confidently appeal——" He wished the deuce they did, for they had not succeeded in getting the proposition underwritten; only for a moment he envisaged the failure of that appeal, saw the "R.W.W.W.T." under a pitiless blue sky and the pitiless

Copyright, 1924, by John Galsworthy.

tropical rain, a mass of scrap-iron, jumbled concrete, and wood; and, with the gesture of a man who dismisses a bad dream, added the words: "to the public," and blew his nose. The secretary entered.

"Watnot," he said, "we must get it out this week. Next Monday there are two big issues due."

"Yes, sir; I'll have it from the printers to-morrow. Do you think we shall get the money?"

"We must, Watnot."

"Yes, sir."

He was sorry for little Watnot and his five hundred a year—a married man, three children. Well, somehow they would get the money. For, though not a family man himself, he had to live. And he began re-reading the prospectus, to see whether he could truthfully strengthen it. He could not; indeed, one or two paragraphs challenged the future in striking, if legitimate, fashion—the public were so lethargic, it was always necessary to bring possibilities vividly before them. The market was milked with difficulty in days like these. He thought with distaste of the thin bluish trickle and his personal efforts to thicken it, on the 'phone and in the offices of bankers and other moneyed persons.

Handing the sheets to Watnot, he filled his pipe and leaned back, dreaming for a moment of that retirement which always appeared to him desirable when he had to raise money. What a relief to give up directorship and devote himself to wood-carving and breeding rabbits; to pass the burden on to others, and see them stagger under it and—go down! That was the trouble! If you didn't do the job yourself, nobody did it. His intermittent longing to have done with it all was always being baulked by his self-esteem. If one couldn't believe oneself a better director than other men, one would feel one's life had been wasted. And, if a better director, one's duty was—to direct! He sighed, and blew a cloud of smoke. To raise money, not for oneself, but for industry—nothing ignoble about that; tiring, all the same; yes, and sometimes impossible! This time it must not be—the R.W.W.W.T. was the last plank between him and——! Well, well, something would turn up!

Going to the window, he stared out into the fog. Behind him little Watnot was getting into his coat and hat, to go to the printers with the draft prospectus. Cursitor heard him close the door. London! All the result of money that had been raised by someone! Where on earth did it all come from? His mind groped for a moment with a child-like wonder. He had been raising money for so long that he had lost sense of its origin. Let him see! Money made money. That is, it paid those who dug and ploughed and fished and bred animals and trees and burrowed for minerals, and—er—the rest of it; and, after payment of those people, so far away that they hardly counted, there was money over, from manipulations of what they extracted from the soil; and that would be, of course, the money that he raised—to make money with or—not!

A KNOCK on the door interrupted this reasoning.

"Mr. Henry Cursitor?"

"Yes."

"My name is Gerard Deacon. I was referred to you by Mr. Markham Mays."

"Oh! Ah! Will you sit down?"

While his visitor took the edge of a chair Cursitor coldly studied his appearance. He seemed to be about forty, and had on a blue suit of a shade which suggested the Colonies; a still more Colonial shirt of deeper blue, with its own collar, and a red silk tie. His face was uniformly yellow, with steel-grey eyes burnt dark in the rims, and a sensitive mouth framed in short grizzly-brown moustaches and beard.

"Yes?" said Henry Cursitor.

"I understood from Mr. Mays that you might be open to consider the floating of a company, or at all events the raising of money to work a scheme in Australia."

The voice was educated, but had a slightly nasal tonelessness, as if unaccustomed to speech.

"I'm afraid," said Cursitor, "that my hands are full. Why didn't you take it to Markham Mays himself?"

A faint smile appeared on the face, as if its owner were alone in the room.

"I did; but *his* hands were full. It seems that money's very difficult to raise."

"It is," said Cursitor.

"I'm sorry; it's something quite exceptional."

Cursitor was thinking, "Never knew it not to be," when he was struck by his visitor's rising and walking to the door. The action was so peculiar that he said, quickly:—

"What is it—if I might ask?"

"Water."

"Ah!" said Cursitor; "with water, of course, Australia would be another country."

His visitor walked back to the table, staring straight before him.

"Water! You people don't know what water is. You turn a tap and the thing flows. But I've nearly died of thirst a dozen times, in a country that will grow any mortal thing, and grows nothing, for want of what I could give it to-morrow, if

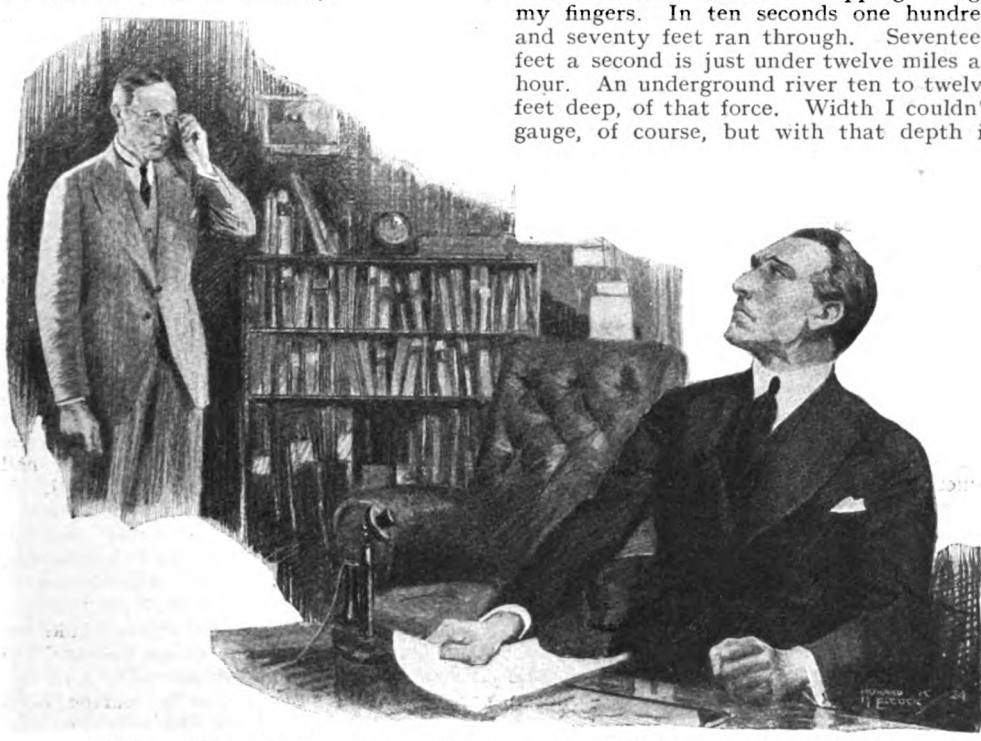
I could get the money. In ten years I could make an earthly paradise. And the water's there—an underground river."

"Underground river?"

"Just that."

Cursitor stared. Was this chap a visionary, with those burnt-rimmed eyes of his? He couldn't stand a visionary.

I took off the iron and put a bit of wood on instead, and let it down again. At one hundred and sixty feet it ran through my fingers. That meant a river! I let another fifty feet go, and pulled it up. There were fifty feet of wet line when I got it to ground. I tried it again and again; always the same result. Then I timed the line slipping through my fingers. In ten seconds one hundred and seventy feet ran through. Seventeen feet a second is just under twelve miles an hour. An underground river ten to twelve feet deep, of that force. Width I couldn't gauge, of course, but with that depth it



"Watnot," he said, "we must get the prospectus out this week. Next Monday there are two big issues due."

"That would be a long business," he said, "even if you're right. But you'll excuse my asking how you discovered such a thing?"

His visitor smiled again.

"Simpler than falling off a log. I struck a rift in the sand one day. At about ten feet the sand became rock, and the rift went down. I've got an instinct for water, it's saved my life more than once. I knew, sure as I'm in this room"—("Is he?" thought Cursitor, rather oddly)—"that there was water down there. Well, sir, I went back to my camp, brought up a marked line with a bit of iron on it, and let it down. The line went slack in my hand at one hundred and seventy feet; I'd bottomed the rift. I pulled it up; the iron was wet, and the line for nearly twelve feet. There was a pocket of water, an underground lake, or a river; and the question was—which? should be considerable. Just think of that force of water running to waste down there, beneath a soil that you need only sprinkle to grow anything! That's my secret, and I've come home to get the money to make a Garden of Eden out of a desert where there's nothing but sand and brush."

As if back in his desert, the fellow stood so still and remote that Cursitor had time to make several reflections. He might be cracked, or again might not, for he certainly had the look of the Bush—that peculiar half-vacant intensity of great spaces and utter loneliness. Cursitor remembered a cousin of his own, many years in Western Australia—the drained, strained look of his face. Still, one had to be so careful! The thought surprised him. It seemed to indicate that he was actually considering the proposition. Absurd! Garden of Eden! Your grandmother!

And yet—wonderful things were done with water; something romantic in those great conversions; at bottom no doubt all industry was founded on them! A pulse began beating in his forehead—not precisely blood to the head, but a warning of the hope which sprang perennial in his nature. Certainly, one could not be too careful!

"Deacon, you said, I think?"

"Gerard Deacon."

"Can you refer me to anyone?"

"Kangaroos and black fellas—I've been out there since I was twenty. I could give you a reference to a storekeeper in Baragawoollah!"

"Your family, perhaps?"

"Norfolk. My father was an Oxford don—he's dead. I've got a brother in the Church, I believe; but when mail comes about once a year—one loses touch. You might find him in a directory, I suppose, but he hasn't seen me since I was twenty."

"I see," said Cursitor. "To raise money in these days, you know, one requires very definite inducements to put before people. One has to be certain of the possibilities. The opinion of an expert in hydraulics would be wanted; and then there's the whole question of whether the plan's feasible in the large."

His visitor continued to stare at his kangaroos, or whatever he was seeing in the fog outside.

"Well," he said, suddenly, "I suppose I shall have to take it to the Government."

"Good Lord!" said Cursitor, in sheer surprise. "They'll ask for two hydraulic reports and the opinions of half-a-dozen experts before they'll let you upstairs."

"Why? Don't they want to develop Australia?"

"Certainly. But they won't spend a penny on verification. Unless you've got evidence in black and white, you needn't go *there!*"

"Oh! I've only been back a week, but I thought by the look of the people here the country'd be glad to be shut of some of them."

"No doubt. But the Government has to have things done for it. That's where we come in."

"But you don't come in, it seems. Well, so long!"

"One moment!" said Cursitor, almost hurriedly. "Where are you staying?"

"Golden Gate Hotel, Covent Garden. The name struck me—in this climate."

"I should like to think the matter over. I'll see Markham Mays and write to you."

With his hand on the door the visitor turned. "That desert nearly did me in three times; I've sworn to get even with it."

Cursitor, who had dropped his eyes to avoid the sight of a fierceness so unbusinesslike, raised them, but his visitor was gone. Phew! He got up; a slight smile curled his lips beneath his somewhat jutting nose. He was seeing great yellow spaces under a brilliant sun, or rather, he saw the fog, very yellow, in the street, where they had just lighted the lamps. Like all who have to do with companies, he prided himself on a practicality which took nothing at face value. He had never had so wild-cat a proposition made to him! And suddenly he seemed to see that yellow space turn green. He was still staring at it when he heard the secretary's voice:—

"It's in the printers' hands, sir; we shall get it out on Thursday."

"Oh! Ah!" He said it with a certain lightness, as though the R.W.W.W.T. was not after all the sole plank between him and——

"Very foggy, Watnot! We want wa——er—rain."

II.

ALL true promoters of industry accept the inevitable. Whether, as an Arctic animal grows its fur, Cursitor had grown the quality in connection with his environment, or whether the quality is one without which people do not promote industry—it was just as well that he had it. Money was tight; the debenture issue a frost so black that the R.W.W.W.T. began settling down at once—Cursitor could see her bones lying on the ocean bed and the fishes scuttling between her ribs. And yet, while contemplating this submarine landscape, he would suddenly catch sight of land so dry that it wanted water.

Coming from the stockbroker's in charge of the issue, with the news: "No, sir, it doesn't move," he walked almost insensibly into the office of Markham Mays. The chairman of the "Brisbane to Perth Concessions, Limited," had just completed his morning's work. Having signed his name four hundred times, he was putting on his hat.

"Ah! Cursitor; I'm just going out to lunch."

Looking at that well-clothed face with small but Napoleonic features, and hearing that comfortable drawl, Cursitor felt a kind of envy. Some fellows had all the luck!

"I sha'n't keep you a minute," he said. "It's about a chap you sent me."

"Ah!" said Markham Mays. "Come and lunch. I always lunch West, at my club; doesn't take so long."

Cursitor—one of those who snatch at cups of coffee standing, or bite a sandwich while their pen traces the words: "I have

perused your report on the alkali deposits in Cochin China "—was soon rolling West.

"Turkish coffee?" said Markham Mays at last. "What did you want me to do?"

"You sent me a man called Gerard Deacon, about an Australian water proposition."

Markham Mays emitted his slow, able laugh.

"Oh! that chap! Mad as a March hare!"

"Then why did you send him to me?" asked Cursitor.

"Couldn't think of anyone else at the moment."

"You wanted him out of the room?"

"I did. But he'd have gone without. No, I was sorry for the poor beggar. Dozens of those chaps in Australia—Bush crazy."

Cursitor frowned. "What brought him to you?"

Like a rich blessing the laugh emerged again. "Said he was attracted by the words 'Brisbane to Perth' in the directors' 'Who's Who.'"

"So you pushed him off on me?"

"I wanted to give the poor devil a chance. Odd coincidence—his father was my tutor at Oxford—old Jeremy Deacon; awful good sort, but dreamy as they make 'em."

That, at least, was some corroboration. Cursitor felt a queer surge of sympathy with that lonely man in the blue shirt.

"I'm not so sure the fellow's cracked," he said.

The long, quizzical regard of Markham Mays incensed him. The chap was too damned successful altogether! He said abruptly:—

"I must be getting back!"

He walked. That was that! Of course, it was no good thinking of this wild-cat proposition if Markham Mays——! He would get back to the City and common sense! . . .

A FEW minutes later he was finding the Golden Gate Hotel in Covent Garden, a flat, yellowish edifice with cheerlessness carried through to its very entrails. Inquiry of a sort of boots was followed by a long pause. Cursitor remained standing in a little lounge with red curtains, three spittoons, two small tables with stained marble tops, and a picture of the Coronation of Queen Victoria above a cast-iron grate. He had just decided to wait no longer when the boots poked his head in and said: "Gent comin' down!" With all of a common sense developed by raising money during a quarter of a century bidding him to cut and run, Cursitor stood, back to the door, between the spittoon at his feet and the Coronation at his head.

"Ah! It's you, sir."

The voice, though nasal, was refined. After all, this Deacon was a gentleman

He turned and said:—

"I've just come from Markham Mays. But perhaps you've been able to do something with your proposition!"

"No. You've got too much water in this country. I've taken my passage back on the *Olla Podrida*. She leaves on the thirtieth.

"Oh!" said Cursitor. "By the way, I happen to have been in Arizona; they've done wonderful things with water there." And, contemplating the blue shirt and the yellow face above it, bluer and yellower than ever in the stronger light of a clear day, he added suddenly:—

"How long would it take me to come and have a look?"

"Overland to Sicily—you could be back in five months. The sand-storm season will be past."

"Have you a map?"

Drawing from his pocket an old map, the fellow spread it on the coffee-stained marble. Cursitor noticed little stains, too, as of coffee, about his lips and beard, and was conscious of a faint herbal odour as they bent side by side.

"Here's Baragawoollah—my place is two days on; it's five days south from there—hundred and fifty miles from the coast—about here"—he placed his finger on a spot where Cursitor could see no names. "All desert—not a station—not a tree—nothing. Just sand, and a little stunted brush."

"And that goes on?"

"For hundreds of miles; right into the centre."

"What a country!"

"Yes; it's a corker."

"Have you gone into the cost at all?"

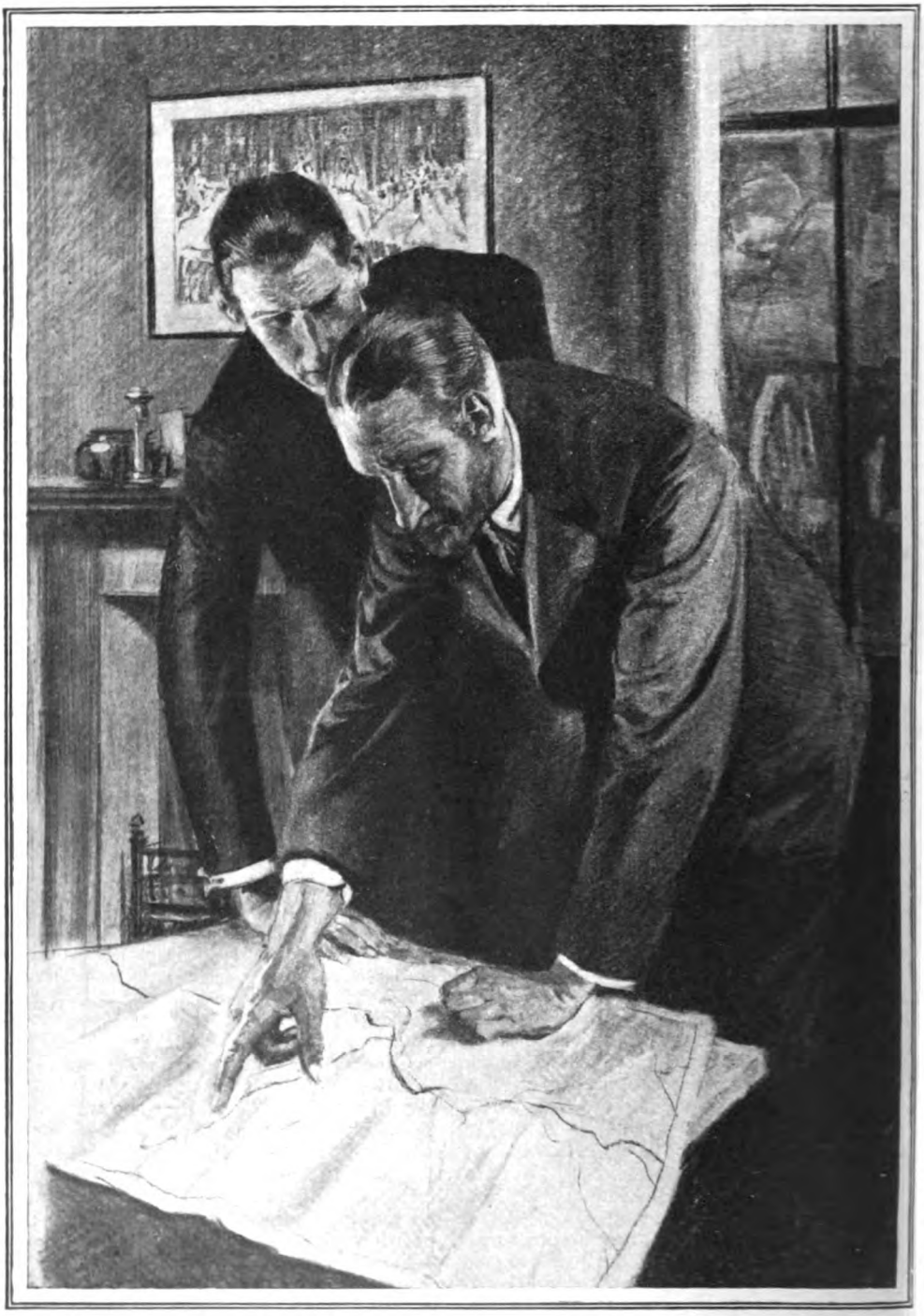
"No; I'm not an engineer. But I can see that damned country green as grass on the earth. What's the conversion of the human soul compared with the conversion of the soil? The soul does its little stunt and passes; the soil remains, and breeds the bodies without which there are no souls."

Cursitor suddenly put on his hat.

"Good-bye!" he said. "Afraid it's not in my line!" And all the way to the Tube he kept murmuring the well-known words: "Not —— likely!"

Crossing from the Bank station to his office he suffered from a sort of nausea. So many people—all raising money in competition with each other! Oh! for the sun—and a touch of Nature! The sun was absent, but the touch of Nature was not far off.

Little Watnot had a cold. "The issue doesn't bove, sir," he said; "it doesn't bove."



Drawing from his pocket an old map, the fellow spread it on the coffee-stained marble.

" I know that," said Cursitor with irritation. " There's no money in this country, Watnot. The general meeting's not for seven months. I've a good mind to try and raise it in Australia. They've more sense of water there."

Little Watnot sneezed. What a rabbit the fellow was ! Cursitor did not stay long.

He did not stay long anywhere in the days that followed, uncontrollably restless. Whether in his bachelor flat at Westminster, in his office, or on his golf course, he wished to be somewhere else. He longed for the society of people with a wide view of things, or for the society of no one but himself. He bought a book on water, and surprised acquaintances by asking such questions as : " Suppose you have a current running twelve miles an hour, and drop a nine-inch pipe into it, how many feet will your water be forced up, without artificial aid ? " And when they answered : " About two," he looked at them with acrimony. His compatriots seemed to him lamentably sunk in the immediate struggle for an unpleasant existence. The British Empire had never before loomed so large—all founded on water ! There seemed to him a growing certainty of money to be raised for the R.W.W.W.T. in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Perth. No good sitting down and waiting for the end.

HE joined the s.s. *Olla Podrida* at Suez, and scanned the list of passengers anxiously. He found that visionary fellow's name among the second-cabin lot, so that with a little care he need see nothing of him, for he himself was in the saloon, and his name not in the list at all. He felt lighthearted in that brilliant sunshine, with so much water about, and felt his letters of introduction from time to time—more and more convinced that there would be money to be had for the asking. At Colombo he went on shore, strolled in the Cinnamon Gardens, and watched a mango tree grown while he waited. The same night, too hot to sleep, and slightly drunk on the scent from that spicy coast, he was leaning over the rail.

" Southern Cross in a few days now, sir ! "

Yellower than ever, in his eternal blue shirt, was that chap, leaning there beside him.

" The place to see it from is the Bush—it's company there. So you're coming up with me to have a look at the water, after all ? "

" No fear," said Cursitor.

" Pleasure trip ? "

" No. I've come in connection with a concern I direct in Rangoon."

" I see. This is an Australian boat."

" I know that," said Cursitor, pettishly. " I'm going to Melbourne." For a moment he thought wildly of rushing up on to the bridge and demanding to be put back on shore. The ship blew suddenly her melancholy whistle.

" Moving," said the voice beside him. " I shall just catch the coasting steamer at Perth. I've a notion I can trace out where that river comes near the surface. The ground drops gradually away—in three or four miles the Bush should be a lot lower."

" Ah ! " said Cursitor, very distantly.

Under the blazing stars he watched the land fade slowly, the tropic trees blurring into loom, the lights shifting into scarcity. But still the breath of the shore reached him —heavy, sweet.

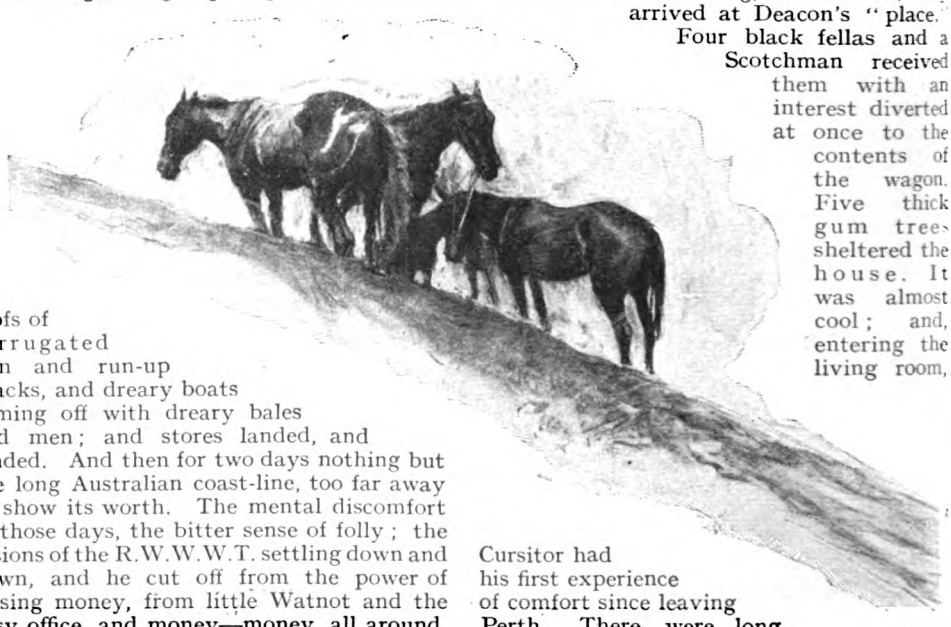
" No stink about the Bush—clean air. You ought to have a look at Australian desert, sir ; it's not a common product. I'll larn it to be a tud, yet ! "

With those slow, vengeful words came the faint remembered odour. The fellow smelled like some plant or other. Was it the result of living where he said there was no stink ?

DURING the next ten days Cursitor lived emotionally a double life. Whenever he saw Deacon he was full of irritable common sense ; at other moments, especially under the stars, ridden by a sort of longing. Fortune, the British Empire, Henry Cursitor and Co. ! Would there be any harm in just seeing for himself ? It committed him to nothing, would not take him more than six weeks, the fellow said. Ought one to throw away any chance ? Suppose that river could be tapped near the surface—what enormous possibilities ! Arizona—as he had seen it—fertile square miles of alfalfa, cotton, tobacco, fruit, and wheat, bordered with low banks and cottonwood trees, golden-budded in February sunlight. All made with water ! And round them—desert of cactus, creosote-bush, mesquite, where water was not yet, within that filmy receding ring of violet mountains ! A Garden of Eden growing like the mango tree while you waited ! To be the man who worked another miracle like that, watered the earth until it teemed, and paid high dividends ! Really, it was—— Ah ! there stood that visionary chap, leaning over the taffrail, staring at the water ! No ! It was madness. . . . He got off at—Perth.

On the coasting steamer he was almost unapproachable. He and Deacon took up most of it. They shared the only cabin ; but Cursitor slept on the long seat in the saloon—he could not stand the fellow at such close quarters. He poured cold water on himself, and watched askance that chap

unperturbed in his visions, and blue shirt. And the long Australian coast dragged by—sandy foothills and sandy foothills, with now and again a group of gum trees round roofs of corrugated iron and run-up shacks, and dreary boats coming off with dreary bales and men; and stores landed, and landed. And then for two days nothing but the long Australian coast-line, too far away to show its worth. The mental discomfort of those days, the bitter sense of folly; the visions of the R.W.W.W.T. settling down and down, and he cut off from the power of raising money, from little Watnot and the cosy office, and money—money, all around. Even if you couldn't raise it, what a comfort—money!



Cursitor had his first experience of comfort since leaving Perth. There were long wicker chairs and books; a dog got up and licked his hand; an Irish terrier with all its tail. A native woman brought in a drink; it tasted of whisky, limes, and sugar.

"Baragawoollah!" There it was—corrugated iron and gum trees—a little lonely lump, dusky in the white coast-haze, like a blue tick on the side of a pointer dog. And he, Henry Cursitor, was about to disembark there with a kit-bag and a visionary. Lord! Lord! Baragawoollah! Civilization! Two days beyond, and five days beyond that. The chump he was!

They went ashore in a lighter. All next day and next they drove together in the summer heat in a wagon behind mules. The wheels ran deep through rutted sand. There was no shade. Deacon pointed out the features. Cursitor could not see them, and hardly ten minutes passed without his thinking: "I was cracked." They slept at stations in whose owners Cursitor noticed the same rangy stare of intent vacancy that Deacon had. Their boisterous welcomings would be suddenly eclipsed, as if they were back at once, looking for something in the distance. "That'll be water," he thought. He noted the wells and little irrigation works with a feeling of despair. It seemed to him like trying to wash a blanket by sneezing on it in a corner. On the second day scant herbage appeared, and there were sheep. At every meal, night and morning, Cursitor ate mutton and tomatoes and drank tea with preserved milk. He wondered how long it would be before his shirt turned blue and he acquired that stare.

On the second evening, as dusk fell, they arrived at Deacon's "place." Four black fellas and a Scotchman received them with an interest diverted at once to the contents of the wagon. Five thick gum trees sheltered the house. It was almost cool; and, entering the living room,

"Make yourself at home," said Deacon. "This is the best chair. Grub'll be ready in an hour."

Alone in the long chair with the dog beside him, Cursitor stared out at the stars between the foliage of the gum trees; and a curious peace slid into his soul. This, then, was the edge! Beyond this—they said—was nothing! Limitless unwatered waste; sand and the stars! And Deacon had lived here twenty years. An odd reverence, like one of those tricks of atmosphere in old Italian landscapes, coloured at that moment his vision of this fellow. What store he must have of pluck and self-sufficiency! Or was there magic in this dry starry peace, and the chap spellbound—pickled in space and sand? And how long would it take to pickle Henry Cursitor, so that he too shook off the fret of raising money and sat down on the edge of nothing? Absurd! The moon must be up behind the house, for all the gum-tree leaves were silver, scimitar-shaped like the swords of Saracens, moving with a glitter in a little wind. They had cut the stars out of the sky; shredded them to powder, so that the firmament was chalky blue, and the earth dusted with chopped

stars. And on that powdery surface the shadows of the gum trees trickled out like deep blue water. " I'll larn it to be a tud, yet ! "—the words did not tally with peace ; they seemed to show that this chap still had the urge which, twenty years ago, had landed him on the edge of nothing ; the spirit to get farther, which had made man's world out of dry desert or shadowy forests ; brought industry to being, raised money like water ! To Cursitor's ears came the thin music of a black fella blowing on a shell ; the gum-tree leaves shook out a crisp and chancy rustle ; the yowl of a dingo wandered eerily far out. And the Irish terrier licked his hand with a dry tongue, exploring up his wrist for moisture.

III.

THE last sheep on Deacon's " place " was a memory three days old ; there was no herbage now, and the only shade—their moving shadows. They marched from sun-

They slept a little, ate a little, drank their allowance of water sip by sip ; while their horses drowsed in the grilling heat.

down right on through the night ; and, when their shadows began drying up under the climbing sun, lay down beneath a strip of canvas painted with layers of red and yellow, inclined on two stakes driven sloping into the sand. As the sun heeled over, their black fella would rise from the lee of a mule and shift a stake, so that they always had the ray-disperser between them and the sun. Stifling under it, they slept a little, ate a little, sucked limes slowly, drank their allowance of water sip by sip ; while their horses, the black fella, and the pack-mules, eased of all gear, drowsed in the grilling heat. One day more, and black fella, pack-mules, water-skins, all would be left, and they two with a water-skin apiece would make a dash for it.

Cursitor suffered the tortures of a townsman no longer in his youth ; yet was he curiously uplifted. The night air was cool, and the thought of nearing that water stimulating as the words of any prospectus he had ever issued. To the faint shuffle of their march through the Bush silence, he composed invitations to the public. " This desirable countryside, with its perfect climate and incalculably fertile—er—sand, needs only water to make it rival Meso-potamia in the days of the Chaldees. Here we have within—er—some thirty days of London, a possible settling ground for thousands of our surplus population, a new province which may rival in productivity any tract of its size in the British Empire.

Tomatoes alone. The appeal is made rather from patriotic than from commercial——" No! Keep to the pocket. Even during the most patriotic periods of the war shareholders had needed dividends. And behind his shadow moving grotesque over the moonlit sand, his mind went on: "Careful survey has shown that, properly worked, there is no end to the possibilities. A light railway to the admirable natural harbour of Baragawoollah——" Cursitor was thrown forward on his horse's neck. Had the animal been carried away too? Recovering the upright, a little shaken, he fixed his eyes on the Southern Cross. How Deacon steered out into this waste, bereft of trail, and tree, and hill! Did his nostrils scent that far-off water? In perfect silence he steered. Cursitor remembered the words of his garrulous guide in Arizona: "When I'm workin' on a desert trail I've got no use for talk; no, mister." And his confidence increased. Odd—for in all his experience, so far, confidence had depended on a flow of words.

Sunrise, the fourth morning, revealed greyer sand and a sparse brush. They camped where there was brackish water, from which branched the tracks of dingoes.

"We start from here," said Deacon. "Have a good sleep; you'll need it. A night's ride, a day on the job, and a night's ride back. We can just carry enough water."

Cursitor slept little because of flies and ants, and fears of this dash into desert space with just enough water for survival. Suppose he got separated from Deacon; or this black fella decamped with the gear while they were away; or the dingoes who came here to drink were to eat the mules; or there were one of those sand-storms Deacon spoke of with such distaste? Suppose—suppose a hundred things! Potent memories of his London flat, where nothing was ever disturbed from year's end to year's end; of the financial columns of *The Times*, little Watnot, and other fixed objects, mingled with his fears, the burning sun, and the bites of ants to keep him wakeful. And whenever he opened his eyes, there would be Deacon, gazing at distance, like a Mussulman with his mind on Mecca.

In all his quarter of a century's service to industry and the British Empire, he had never been through hours of such exquisite discomfort. And to know that they were but the preamble of the still more exquisite tempted him in crescendo to the words: "I feel too bad to go on—I must wait for you here." If only he had thought of raising a clinical thermometer to 105 and brought it with him! As it was, he had not a sign of fever. He had even got over his stiffness, and, though bitten and unshaved, was conscious of rude health. No! If he refused, it must be on the grounds of insanity. He would say quite calmly: "Now that I've seen the nature of the country, I feel the whole thing's mad; you could never get the money to exploit such a God-forsaken wilderness." Really, it would need the faith of Early Christians—nothing Early Christian about investors! And yet—he had known cases of belief in the miraculous—when it was properly put to them. But no one could put a desert like this properly—it was drier than America! Twice he sat up, moistening his parched lips for the effort; twice, at sight of that visionary fellow, burnt to the deepest yellow now, above his blue shirt, he sank down again, to wait for a better moment. And his determination not to go on with this crazy adventure grew and grew.

AT six o'clock they started, with a large water-skin securely fastened behind each of their saddles. As the sun wheeled down, the footpace became a loping shuffle. The day went out in opal and violet, for a few minutes the Bush trembled with radiance; then the darkness rushed together, and they were riding by starlight. A queer exhilaration invaded Cursitor. "Only those who have seen the Bush at sunset, and drunk-in the nectar of the pure night air, can conceive the intoxication of its beauty. This wonderful *paysage*" . . . No! Avoid foreign words to the British public! . . . "has a quality all its own." Disease is unknown there. . . ." And so are people—would be the implicit context to those who read between the lines; as for those who didn't—well, the raising of money depended on them! Cursitor touched his horse with his heel; the animal had stumbled. In three hours they had left all trace of brush again, and were on pure sand. He hoped that they were leaving heavy hoof-marks. Away from the pack-mules, the jingle of their little bells, the minor gutturals of the black fella, this ride out into immensity was breeding in him sensations at once proud and timorous. He had stuck it—was seeing it through! He could fancy little Watnot's eyes bulging out at this tale of dark loneliness. He must remember to describe how the stars glittered, the ghostly colour of the sand, the dead silence; and how that chap in front, with the water-skin behind him, resembled a—a primeval jar reared on two moving legs! Really he and Deacon were—were like twin spirits of water, riding to the aid of their own element! His horse pecked; the water-skin behind him wobbled against his back; and his mood went veering to the timorous. If

only that chap would speak, and break this desolating silence—this sense of being disembodied—out of touch with all reality! Or was—was *this* reality, and all that he had known so far unreal? Here they were, alone with the primal source of money, with the earth, before it had been operated on; alone, and nomad as the black fellas, as the very dingoes! His mind groped back painfully from this desert, unscratched by man, to the City of London—once a marsh—an immense, immense change! All done by water or, rather, by drainage! Mesopotamia, of old, a desert, watered and scratched, had grown the mightiest, most teeming cities of the past; and now it was desert once more, unwatered and unscratched. No wonder mirage took the form of water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink! A tricky thing—water. Not safe! Still, he had sometimes watered capital with distinct advantage!

The shape in front of him ceased moving suddenly.

"Ten minutes. Get off and stretch your legs, but don't let go of your horse. Here's the moon."

Cursitor looked back. The round moon, like a bright cunning face, was peering at him from the edge of a swelling on the plain. "I'll whiten your bones," it seemed to say. Beastly thought!

"How on earth do you know your way, Deacon?"

"The stars."

No fixed star in the southern hemisphere! Must be in the fellow's mind—the water star!

"Ready? On we go, then."

In the moonlight Cursitor saw their shadows slink out in front of them, as if their spirits were leading their bodies on—to water!

IV.

"WE'RE thereabouts. I must wait for the sun. Give me your gee."

Cursitor resigned the rein, and lay down on the sand, soft as a bed, softer than he had known it yet. In two minutes he was asleep. He had a perfect dream of—Fenchurch Street, with a stream of water flowing down its middle. When he awoke the sun was high; the horses stood tethered to a stake driven deep in between two humps of saddle heaped round with sand. One empty skin lay squash where they had been watered from it; the other, full and swelling, stood beyond reach. Parched and miserably sore, Cursitor got up. No sign of Deacon, save his footmarks in the loose, thick, heavy sand. Cursitor tried to utter a "Cooee!" but his throat refused—too dry.

Going to the water-skin, he cautiously undid the mouthpiece and drank his fill. He ate some meat and biscuit and lit his pipe. They must have nearly hit the spot, or Deacon would not have tethered the horses and gone off on foot. Just here the plain dipped; he would be lost to sight within a mile. Cursitor looked at his footmarks. To that derelict townsman in this waste they were very soothing. When Deacon had located the rift he would come back on his tracks and fetch him. For two hours he waited, increasingly tortured by the heat and loneliness. Couldn't the fellow find his water; had he sprained his ankle, or had sunstroke? In the third hour of that grilling heat a thought brought him suddenly to his knees, scooping at the sand. He had scooped to the depth of nearly two feet before he found resistance. Good God! All this surface was new—a huge sand-drift. There must have been one of those sand-storms which obliterated everything for miles, till another great wind arose and swept it farther on. The chap couldn't find the rift; then—why didn't he come back? Two searchers were better than one! He would follow Deacon's tracks! But dared he leave the horses? Suppose, while he was hunting for Deacon, the animals became restless, pulled up the stake and went off, dragging stake and saddles? He waited another hour, and his heart went down and down. It was past noon now, and the horses seemed asleep. He took another drink, tightened his belt, and set forth along the footmarks. They zigzagged, as if Deacon had been quartering the ground. Cursitor had followed them for half an hour when he caught sight of a dark object on the sand. A "Cooee!" of surprising volume burst from his throat; he repeated it, hurrying along. It *was* Deacon, seated under his wide felt hat, but he gave no sign of hearing. Had he gone deaf, or out of his mind? Cursitor came up in anger. Deacon was leaning forward over his knees, a little black pipe in his hand, a little yellow dribble at the corner of his smiling lips, a film over his staring eyes. Cursitor bent to shake him by the shoulder; but stopped at the look on that ecstatic face, a look as if the fellow were gazing at a promised land stretched out before him. A reek came up to Cursitor's nostrils. "God!" he thought. "Opium!"

For some minutes he simply stood and stared; then, in a fright, began a desperate effort to rouse the fellow from that ecstatic coma. No good! He must come to of his own accord. Taking away the little pipe, he sat down to wait. He had no experience of opium. How long would Deacon sit like that, dreaming his dreams, and what would

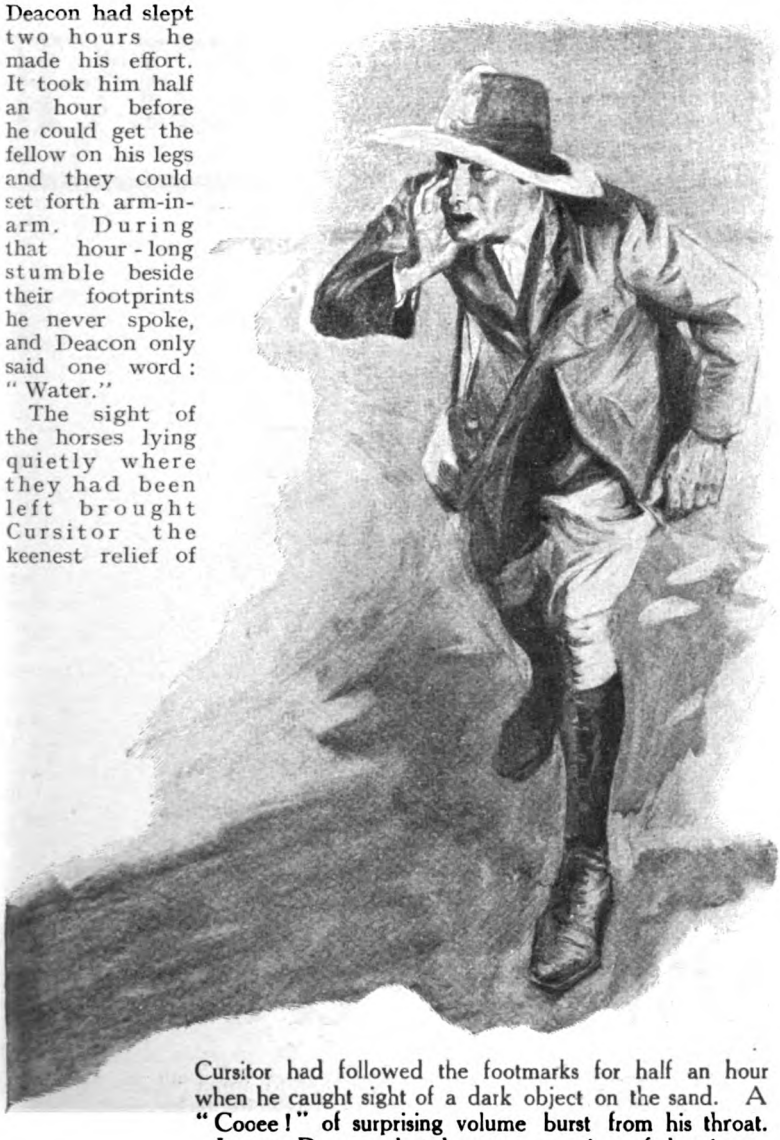
he be like when he came to? Disgust filled Cursitor's whole being. It was as if the captain of a ship were found dead drunk in a storm, a colonel lolling on a sofa while his regiment went into action. That chap had left him in Hell and gone off to Paradise. But, gradually, that sick look of ecstasy touched his heart. In front of this drugged deserter was a mirage of green crops and running rills—of trees and grass and flowers and fruits—of all that water brings! He must have hunted over that vast sand-drift for his underground river—like a lost dog for its master—till, convinced at last that the sand would guard its secret, that the desert had beaten him, he had sat down in the heat exhausted, and turned to the respite of an opium dream. There, in a few brief moments, out of a little smoke, he could fashion all that he had lost, "all" that would have taken years of anxiety and risk and effort to grow with water in that desert; out of the sand in a quarter of an hour he had created him a Garden of Eden, like God before him—the green sweetness, the corn and oil and wine—or at least the alfalfa and tomatoes—of redemption. He had made the desert to bloom like a rose, just by lifting hand to mouth and drawing in the fumes of a little black burning pellet. Could one blame the chap so bitterly disappointed of his hopes—a poor devil who had lived twenty years on the edge of this unscratched waste, dreaming dreams of making something out of nothing?

Cursitor got up and looked around him. Sand, sand, sand! Had the fellow really ever struck that rift at all, ever brought his line up, ever dropped it into any river underground? Was that all, perhaps, a pipe dream too, so strange and seizing that it had destroyed the difference between it and reality? And, gazing intently at that yellow ecstatic face, he thought: "I shall never know for certain—never know whether I haven't been utterly spoofed by a man who didn't know that he was spoofing!" The thought was desolating. To have had for nothing this laborious, this perilous experience, and never be able to speak of it, for fear of being taken for the fool he had read himself to be on the small but Napoleonic features of Markham Mays. And he sat down again to wait for the look of ecstasy to die, for that dream to fade, as all dreams must, into the starkness of reality. Hour after hour he waited, while the sun rode slowly down the sky. About four o'clock Deacon rolled over

like a log. Cursitor let him sleep. He had to—it was the only chance; and yet he was devoured by thirst and fears. Were the horses still where he had left them, or had they broken loose and gone off to find the mules and water? Somehow he must get that fellow back before darkness came, smearing out their footmarks. When

Deacon had slept two hours he made his effort. It took him half an hour before he could get the fellow on his legs and they could set forth arm-in-arm. During that hour-long stumble beside their footprints he never spoke, and Deacon only said one word: "Water."

The sight of the horses lying quietly where they had been left brought Cursitor the keenest relief of his life. In touch with safety, his indignation and disgust revived. He would tell the fellow what he thought of him, he would—— And he did—not, hadn't the heart, the poor devil looked so sick and miserable. They started at eight o'clock; Cursitor left the reins loose on his horse's neck—the animal would know the way; and beside him rode Deacon, head down, like a beaten prisoner. In the cool reviving air of night Cursitor's spirit dwelt endlessly on drink, on baths, and the sea, and fellow-beings who did not dream, but lived sanely and made money where the earth had been tamed with water. But when at last the smoke from the black fella's brush fire was in his nostrils, he gazed at the paling sky, and the desert stretching to the bonfire of the dawn, with a joy that had perverted ache in it, as if he were leaving something precious that he would never see again; the earth where man was not; the waterless adventure of his life.



Cursitor had followed the footmarks for half an hour when he caught sight of a dark object on the sand. A "Cooee!" of surprising volume burst from his throat. It was Deacon, but he gave no sign of hearing.

V.

LEANING over the taffrail of the s.s. *Orinoco* three months later, Cursitor watched Vesuvius growing small. He had not raised a penny. The R.W.W.W.T. had made no appeal to Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth; and in the light of the Mediterranean sunset red on the water he could see nothing in front of him.

"Yes, sir," said a voice, "as I was saying last night, that Basque region simply stinks of metals. If I could raise the money to unwater a mine I know of, not a hundred miles from Bilbao, I could make the fortune of anyone who comes in. There's copper there running up to seventeen and more per cent., and easily worked, too."

Cursitor turned. "Oh?" he said. "How did the water get into it?"

They got off at Gibraltar.

The KILLING of

BY

EDWIN PUGH

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

I.

PETER WRAY toiled wearily up the stairs in the golden glow of a July evening.

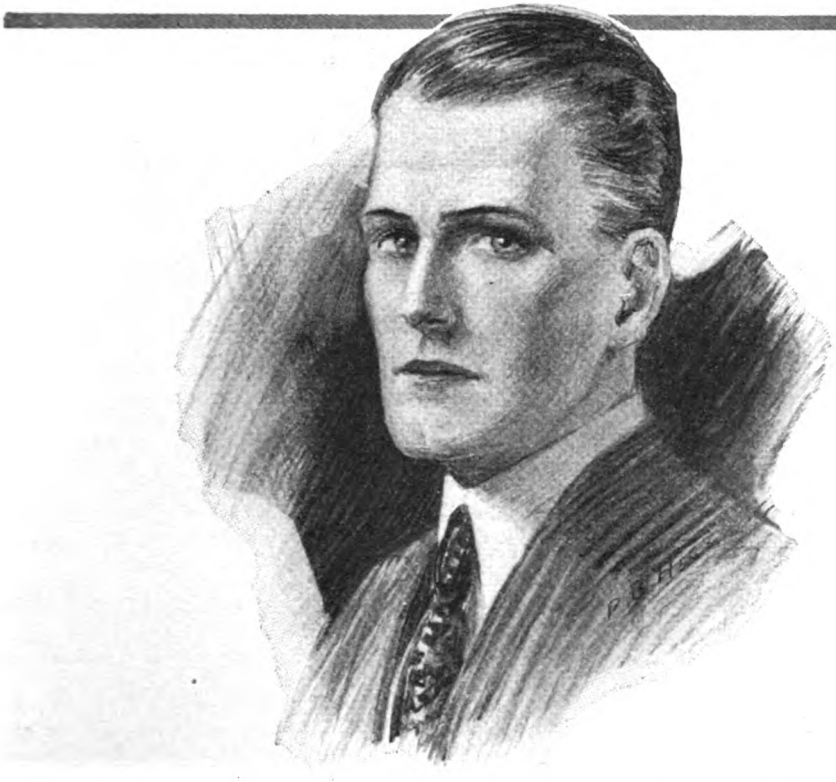
The stairs were broad and shallow, the panelling and the balustrade of old carved oak. Overlooking each spacious landing was a big square window, bare of curtains, through which the yellow sunshine streamed.

It was rather a cruel light, in which the figure of Peter revealed itself as that of a bowed, broken man, with an ugly twisted body, huge hunched shoulders, and spindly thin legs. His head was set askew upon a short, thick neck; his chin was buried in his breast. The stout staff he gripped in his white bony hand was no mere idle toy, but a very necessary support to which he clung, and upon which he leaned heavily as he crawled slowly upward.

From the crown of his soft, shapeless hat of rusty brown felt to the upturned toes of his cumbrous boots, in every fold of his cloak —a sort of grey gaberdine worn to mask his deformity—and in every crease and pucker of the rest of his slovenly attire he showed a lofty disregard of appearances which his wistful, pale, sensitive face, under its wild coronal of tawny locks, seemed to confirm as the outward and visible signs of secret ineffable graces.

One could see at a glance that this poor hunchback was an artist, or had at least an artist's soul, an artist's yearnings, an artist's dreams of impossible beauty. He was, indeed, a poet of consummate achieve-

PETER WRAY



ment and considerable fame. He reached at last the second floor and pushed open the door of the front room. He glanced round the room, a vast apartment, untidy but comfortable, in the centre of which stood a gate-legged table strewn with books and papers; and then his eyes rested with a sort of glad content upon the slender, gracious figure of a girl, who rose from a seat in the window at his entry and came smiling to greet him.

"Hullo, Annabel!" he called out in a parched, husky voice. "Paul not here?"

"I'm not sure," replied the girl as they shook hands. "He may be asleep. I have sat very quiet in case he was."

The hunchback nodded. "He works too hard—the dear, silly chap! I wish he would take a leaf out of my book," the hunchback said.

"But you work hard, too."

"In a way, yes. But then my work is my pleasure. I live for my work. Paul merely works to live."

"I am not so sure of that," said the girl. "Sometimes I think he would rather be a journalist and write political leaders at midnight than do anything else."

"Oh, don't you believe that," said Peter. "He's a bigger, better man than he makes himself out to be."

"You speak as if there were something wrong or foolish in wanting to write political leaders," the girl exclaimed, almost resentfully.

"Well, it isn't exactly dignified work, is it? Anonymity is never dignified. It's a sort of bomb-throwing. It doesn't give the enemy a chance to hit back."

"Paul has no enemies."

"No personal enemies. But if he signed his articles he would have thousands."

"Perhaps that's why he doesn't sign them?"

"Yes," said the hunchback. "Though it isn't that he would mind hurting people for their good. Why should he? Only that

he wouldn't like people to know that it was he who hurt them."

"I think I admire him for that," said the girl, a faint flush beginning to tinge her pale cheek.

"Only for that?" said Peter, sinking into a chair. And the girl's cheeks flamed. "You love him, don't you?" he went on. "You needn't mind telling me, you know. I am only a poor crooked thing—as the poet Pope was—a human note of interrogation going about asking questions."

The girl's lips quivered. She stretched out her two hands towards Peter as if to comfort him, to protect him and succour him. "Oh, please, please don't think so," she murmured.

He laughed. "There's no bitterness in me, my dear," he said. "But there would be, perhaps, if I bottled it up. That's why I say these cross things. They relieve me. They rid me of my spleen and sweeten my soul. See!" He smiled radiantly; and his face was instantly transfigured, almost beautiful. "Now I am my better self again. Is there any tea?"

"No," answered Annabel. "But I'll soon make you a cup."

"Thank you," he said. "And perhaps Paul would like one too. I'll go and see if he's still sleeping. Soft, my dear!"

THREE long, narrow doors faced the three long, narrow windows. The first of these doors was that by which Peter had entered. The others opened into two bedrooms. It was at one of these doors that Peter tapped gently, then stooped down and put his ear to the keyhole.

"Paul!" he whispered. "Paul!" And tapped again.

"It really seems hardly worth while to wake him if he is sound asleep," said the girl.

"He would not like to miss you," said Peter. "I think I had better just peep and see, perhaps."

As he spoke he had opened the door, revealing a transitory glimpse of a handsomely-appointed bedroom. He poked his head round the edge of the door, then withdrew it and faced the girl again.

"He's not there," he said. "His bed has been slept in, but he must have got up and dressed and gone out since I left, only an hour or two ago. How long did you say you had been here?"

"About half an hour."

'He'll be mad to think he has missed you. But it serves him right. I am always telling him he doesn't take enough rest, that he really needs more sleep and should get all he can. And yet—see!—he gets up the moment my back is turned, after going to bed not much before two, and rushes off to some stupid *matinée* or picture-show instead of staying in bed and giving that overwrought brain of his a fair chance."

"Never mind," said the girl. "I should have liked to see him, of course. And perhaps I shall see him, after all. He may be back soon. In the meantime, here's your tea."

They sat and sipped and ate small sugary cakes for half an hour or so; and still Paul did not return. They talked of indifferent matters until Peter said abruptly: "Annabel, I think I shall clear out of this."

Her hand shook. Her face blanched. "You mean——?" she stammered.

"I mean that I am tired of living in London. I pine for the fresh green country, wide spaces, an unbounded sky. And then I have a longing for solitude. Paul is the dearest old chap in the world, of course, and we have always been like brothers together. Closer, nearer than brothers, perhaps. For brothers sometimes jar upon one another, and we never do. Three years we've been together now. Three years! And I have been very happy in his friendship. But now—now I think I shall leave him. I think it will be better for him. I'm rather a drag on him, you know. He is so good, so unselfish. He gives up so much of his time to me. And yet I am not much company." Tears glittered in the hunchback's eyes. "I believe he would do fine work, great work, if he hadn't me to worry about and look after."

"Oh, no!" cried the girl. "He has told me that you inspire him. That if he ever does do anything great it will be because of your splendid example. He admires you so! Not only your work, but you—yourself. I am sure if you left him we would feel it dreadfully."

"But he would get over that in time," said Peter. "You see, it was different before he met you. Now—now he loves you. And he knows that I love you too. He wants you. He wants to marry you. And he does not speak—for my sake. He is afraid of giving me pain. And so—and so I think I had better go."

"No, no!" cried the girl, in infinite distress. "Don't talk like that. If one of us three must go, let it be me."

"But what good would that do?" said Peter. "That would only mean misery for both of us. And for you too, Annabel. For you love him. I believe you love him as much as he loves you. And how much he loves you! . . . Well, perhaps I alone know how much he loves you." He made a sudden movement as if to straighten his bent, twisted figure. "Hark!" he whispered. "I think I hear his footsteps."

They both listened, but presently the footsteps ceased on the floor below.

"And yet I could have sworn I knew his footstep," murmured the hunchback, as if self-reproachfully.

II.

IT is said that like clings to like; but there is also a force of attraction which sometimes defies this law and draws unlike to unlike. The friendship

Peter tapped gently, then stooped down and put his ear to the keyhole. "Paul!" he whispered. "Paul!" And tapped again.

between Peter Wray and Paul Newell was a case in point. A greater contrast between man and man it would have been hard to find among intimates anywhere.

These two men, who were of about the same age, had first met in Paris some three years ago, and had ever since been inseparable. They were known among their

acquaintance as David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, Castor and Pollux, and by the names of all the other classic examples of friendship.

From the moment of their initial meeting until now they had shared the same rooms, the same interests, the same friends, and, it was said, the same purse. Now they shared the same love for the same woman; and it was whispered that, if such a thing were possible, they would have been content to share the same wife—so deep and strong was the sympathy, so tight and close the bond between them. They were indeed, as no two persons of opposite sex have ever been, a shining example of two minds with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.

Paul was tall, slim and erect, handsome and strong, something of a dandy, invariably dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion. His pale face was always clean-shaven and his sleek hair brushed back in smooth coils from his high white forehead. His voice was soft and low; his accent irreproachable.

How different was Peter Wray! A hunchback, as we have seen, bowed and twisted, small and weakly, of a slovenly exterior and gross habits, not too scrupulously clean in his person, with hair that seemed never to know comb or brush, with a voice that croaked and rasped, and a polyglot accent picked up apparently in the vilest stews of half the big cities of Europe.

And, as in these minor characteristics, so it was with them both in more vital matters.

Paul was punctilious and orderly, industrious and painstaking, punctual and exact, trustworthy in small things as in great. Peter was haphazard and careless, seemed to have no sense of time or proportion, was moody and erratic, subject to frequent brief bouts of feverish energy in which he worked like a man possessed, and then to spells of idleness and apathy verging on sloth. He was witty, quick-spoken, inclined to be sardonic. Paul's comparative slowness and dullness was only redeemed by his unconquerable good-humour and even temper.

Peter was a born rebel and loved argument for its own sake. Paul was easy-going and seemed to have no strong convictions at all. No better foil could have been found to the fiery bitterness of Peter's wit than the cool gentleness of Paul's.

Only in one thing were they alike, and that was in being intensely literary. But even here they differed. For it was in the ecstasies of poetry that Peter expressed himself, whilst Paul preferred the more sober medium of prose. Yet they were both artists in their different styles; and Paul would no more have perpetrated a clumsy phrase or an obscure sentence than Peter would have passed a false quantity or an indifferent rhyme.

They had the same circle of friends and were about equally popular with the same people. But it was understood that Peter shrank from mingling with crowds or appearing in public where his deformities would be conspicuous, whereas Paul, being born to cut an effective figure, was more at home in other men's homes than in his own apartments. So that if you wanted to enjoy Peter's society you must go to see him; if you wanted Paul's you invited him to visit you.

And so, since Paul worked mostly by night, as political editor of *The Voice*, and Peter, being something of an invalid, was compelled to live simply and regularly the simple and regular life of the average stay-at-home man, the two friends were never seen together. And yet, so binding was the link between them, and so deep their sympathy, so great their interest in one another, that to meet and talk with either of them was to see and hear the other as it were at second-hand. They were always quoting one another. Paul was never so happy as when he was singing the praises of Peter, nor Peter so manifestly pleased as when he was extolling Paul.

At the same time they each showed a keen sense of the other's little weaknesses and foibles as well as a lively appreciation of his virtues and attainments.

It was into the common life of these two singularly ill-assorted and yet well-assorted men that Annabel Fairfield had drifted, heedlessly, aimlessly, as the representative of a ladies' paper desiring an interview with Peter Wray. It was in the closely interwoven texture of their common destiny that she had somehow contrived to entangle herself, and was now caught fast.

III.

"HE'S gone. Peter's gone," said Paul
"Gone?" cried Annabel. "Oh!"

Paul Newell brought his firm lips more closely together and knitted his straight brows. Annabel, looking at him, thought for the thousandth time how utterly unlike Peter he was.

Peter, in moments of stress, became vehement and gesticulatory. His large, loose, passionate mouth, sensuous and pleasure-loving, seemed to widen and stretch, grow suddenly cruel and ugly and snarling; he had a trick of raising one eyebrow and lowering the other that was somehow devilish; he would fling his arms outward and upward; he would throw back his shaggy head and cry out tempestuously, sometimes utter strange oaths, in that harsh, rasping voice of his.

But Paul, his friend, even in this moment of acute anguish, was still and quiet as always, only a little sterner, a little paler, and generally more subdued. He stood there before her, straight and slim, in his suit of fashionable grey tweeds, speckless and immaculate as to collar and cuffs, trim and neat in every detail of his person. And yet suffering—suffering intensely. In the midst of her distress at his news, in the midst of her feeling of panic at the thought of their loss, she could not help drawing these invidious comparisons between him and the absent Peter.

And then a great wave of pity surged up in her and she cried out :—

" It is all my fault—all my fault. Oh, poor Peter ! "

" Your fault ? What do you mean, my dear ? Sit down," said Paul.

She sat down as he bade her. She always did as he bade her. It seemed quite right, too, that he should call her his dear now, though usually it was only Peter who called her his dear.

She had always been, in a way, on more free and easy terms with Peter. It was usually Peter whom she saw at the queer old house near Fitzroy Square, Paul being often asleep during the day or taking his headlong pleasures abroad. It was borne in subtly upon her that she knew Peter much better than she had ever known Paul, though it was Paul whom she loved and not Peter. Now she felt slightly embarrassed, almost abashed, in the presence of this cool, soft-spoken, self-contained young man. It struck her as somehow wrong that she should be alone with him in that vast room. She felt momentarily afraid. She had never felt like that with Peter. She had always felt quite free to drop in on Peter at any time and share his solitude or his meals, or anything else that was his, as a sister might share them with a brother. That was the careless, Bohemian habit of her class and his—of Paul's too, you would have thought ; but no ! there was never any suggestion of that Bohemian spirit, or of that freemasonry which binds together all artists and all the camp-followers of art, in the speech or demeanour, the habits or the manners, of Paul.

" You mustn't get it into your head that it's your fault he's gone," said Paul. " See here what he says."

And he handed her a letter in the thick, crabbed handwriting that she knew so well.

" Dear Paul," she read, " I'm off. Forgive me. Don't bother about me. I shall be quite all right. I only want to get away from all this bricks and mortar. Perhaps I shall go abroad. I have visions of a little red and white chalet at the foot of snow-streaked, cloud-capped mountains. But wherever I am I shall write to you, sending the letter through Kedder, so that you may not be able to find me.—With all my heart, PETER."

" And that's all," said Paul. " He must have left late last night, directly after I went down to the office." He bit his forefinger and seemed to glower at the girl.

" What are you going to do ? " she asked him.

" What can I do ? " he exclaimed. " He isn't an escaped criminal or a lunatic. I can't put the authorities on his track. If I found him I couldn't hold him or bring him back by force. And it's always open to him to give me the slip again. Can you suggest anything ? "

She shook her head, helplessly, hopelessly. Bright tears clotted her lashes and rolled down her cheeks.

" Don't—don't cry," urged Paul, gently. " Oh, I wish I could cry ! "

IV.

A MONTH passed, during which both Annabel and Paul received several curt notes from Peter, sent to them through Kedder, his impenetrable, unapproachable literary agent.

And then the notes ceased. They had contained but little information, no information at all as to the exile's whereabouts or doings, merely a few hasty words, a few brief reassurances as to his health, and some expressions of a wish that they would try to forget him.

Then, suddenly, even those messages stopped. There was silence. An utter silence like a fathomless black void into which poor lost Peter had leapt to extinction.

If they had known he was dead they would have suffered less. As it was he seemed to be for ever in their thoughts. Each petty item of their daily round, each commonplace object that their eyes rested upon, at home or in the streets, all things seemed redolent of associations with him. There was never any news in the papers but they felt they must discuss it with him. There were no new books, no new plays, no new political developments but served to remind them of that vanished personality, and they seemed to hear his husky, eager voice, his thin, shrill laughter, beating like black boding wings about their heads. He came into everything, he was a part of every interest, he dominated all their thoughts, and in all their comings and goings and doings they seemed to miss him, nothing seemed complete without him.

But presently they became in a way reconciled to his absence. In a few short months they had accepted the fact of his

disappearance as it is happily given to human nature to accept all the facts of the most poignant and personal tragedies. They ceased to repine for him. They thought of him as one dead. They had even a sad pleasure in thinking of him, in quoting him, in recalling little incidents in which he had been absurd or splendid or—as they said—" just Peter."

So that when, after six months, Paul asked Annabel to be his wife, though she had a strange passing sense of treachery towards Peter as she said the word, she answered " Yes."

V.

THEY were to be married in the spring. Paul had improved his position and was soon to assume supreme control of the paper upon which he had served for the past three years as political editor. The old rooms in the house near Fitzroy Square were to be given up. They were to rent a big new house at Hampstead. Already they spent most of their spare time and spare cash at furniture shops and other shops, and in doing all the other usual things that are so full of a queer sort of breathless adventure and do so intrigue and excite engaged couples.

The shadow of Peter was less darkly, less heavily, upon them. There were times, whole hours, in which they contrived to forget him—to remember him again with a sudden hot feeling of shamefaced remorse.

One afternoon Annabel called at Paul's rooms and, going into the big front room as usual, was hailed by her lover from his bedroom.

" That you, dear ? I've overslept myself. But I'm up now. Nearly dressed. Shaving. Make yourself comfy. I'll be with you in a jiff."

Then she heard the sound of his light footsteps as he bustled about.

He began to whistle a soft, plaintive air. It was an air that Peter had been fond of. She had often heard him whistle it as Paul was whistling it now. It seemed heartless of Paul to be whistling Peter's tune. A vague resentment stirred in her as she listened. She was angry with Paul on Peter's behalf. And angry with herself too for so soon forgetting him, for daring to be happy whilst still in utter ignorance of his fate.

For all she knew—or Paul either—he might be dead. But no ! He was not the kind of man who dies and leaves no sign. He was too well known and too much honoured to pass away in silence. His death would be a world-calamity, his loss would be mourned in every country of the civilized world. For, since his disappearance, his fame had increased enormously. Rumours of the mystery of his whereabouts had circulated through the Press and lent that touch of exterior romance to his work in which the public loves to invest its heroes. He was not dead. Somewhere—somewhere out in the darkness and coldness of exile—he still lived and suffered and dreamed, thinking of her, longing for her, breaking his heart for her, perhaps.

In that moment and that mood she almost hated Paul.

It was so heartless of him to whistle, and to whistle that air of all others.

She put her hands over her ears. And then, reproving herself for her senselessness, took them away again.

She seated herself at the gate-legged table and began to turn over—idly, unthinkingly—the usual litter of books and papers that encumbered it.

And suddenly she had a qualm, a pang, a feeling of unnameable misgiving.

She had picked up a page of manuscript, not knowing what she did. And it was as if the writing leapt at her, struck her across the eyes, dazzled and blinded her. For it was Peter's writing.

It was Peter's writing : thick, cramped, sprawling, a blottesque of deletions and corrections, so utterly unlike Paul's writing, so utterly unlike——

She started violently. It seemed to her that the blood ebbed from her face, leaving her eyes, her very lips, cold and dry.

Intermixed with that coarse, gross handwriting were here and there a few words neatly inscribed in another handwriting, the unmistakable handwriting of Paul.

But what had Paul to do with Peter's work ?

What right had he to tamper with that bold, resonant verse—he who wielded the pedestrian pen of the mere journalist ?

" Well, my dear ? "

It was the voice of Paul in her ear. It was the kind, cheerful, smiling face of Paul into which she gazed as she swung round and confronted him.

The page of manuscript dropped from her hand. She saw his gaze follow its fluttering flight as it drifted across the room and rested at last on the carpet, over against the outer door.

She saw his face change. She saw a look of deadly fear pass over that frank, gay countenance which seemed somehow to degrade and vulgarize it, to touch it with a look of meanness, furtiveness. It was the look of a guilty man whose conscience cried out within him in abject dismay at the thought of the imminent discovery of some foul secret.

" Wh-what was that you were reading ? " he gasped out, and darted at the piece of

paper and secured it and crumpled it up in his hand.

The stuttering words, the swooping action, the whole aspect and demeanour of the man, were eloquent of hidden guilt.

"That," she said—"that was Peter's writing. One of his poems."

"Ye-es," he nodded.

"How comes it here?"

He faltered for a moment and then replied, huskily: "He left it behind him."

And she knew that, for some inscrutable reason, he lied to her.

"If he did," she said, her face kindling, her voice vibrant with indignation, "what right have you to tamper with it—alter it?"

"I—I——" Words failed him. He stood there, staring at her, dumbfounded.

A slow horror crept over her. She could feel its numbness in her very bones. She was consumed with a sick loathing of this man, her lover, her husband-to-be. She shrank away from him, putting the table between them.

"Annabel!" he muttered, hoarsely, and raised his hand as if in supplication to her.

Her gaze seemed to fasten on his hand. Her whole being seemed to concentrate itself upon something that that hand betrayed. She pointed her finger at it. His gaze followed hers.

"His ring!" she said. "You are wearing his ring!"

"I—yes," said he.

Shuddering, she hid her face from him, tottered to a seat in the window, dropped into it limply.

"Where is he? You know where he is?" she whispered. "What——?"

It was as if a twilight smile flickered in his brooding eyes.

"Listen!" he said. "Listen!"

But she would not listen.

"I know what you have done," she said. "You have killed him. Murderer!"

"Yes," he said, speaking thickly, rapidly, in the high, clear voice of hysteria. "Yes. You are quite right. I have killed him. He—he was in the way, you see. He had served his purpose. I—I had to get rid of him."

And then he began to laugh, at first softly, musically, as he generally laughed, but presently in rising tones of eldritch discordance.

Suddenly he turned his back on her, fled into his bedroom.

She heard him locking and bolting the door.

VI.

THEN it seemed to Annabel that a dense white cloud descended slowly upon her. It filled the room, blotting out all things. She seemed to float in air. Then, as slowly as it had fallen, the mist dissolved, and she was sitting on the window-seat, her head flung backward and sideways, her cheek against the cold glass. She gazed around her, haggardly, rallying her senses. Then she stirred feebly, stood up, stumbled dizzily.

"Wait—wait!" she heard a voice cry out from the inner room. And again: "Wait!"

She heard—and her senses reeled again. For it was not Paul's voice she heard, but Peter's.

It was Peter's voice, harsh, rasping, so unlike the clear, almost mincing voice of Paul. She began to feel that indeed her reason was deserting her, or that she must be subject to some wild hallucination. She sank back upon her seat again—sat there gazing at the door whence came that mysterious, ghostly voice.

There was perhaps an interval of some five minutes, during which she remained incapable of reflection, her mind a mere welter of crazy imaginings. She could only stare and wonder vaguely, her fancy a prey to mad horror, to echoes and shadows of sounds and things unspeakable.

Then the bedroom door opened. A bent, broken figure, an ugly, twisted body on spindly legs, a shaggy head set askew between hunched shoulders, crept out into the broad, fair daylight and gibbered at her.

She tried to scream, and uttered only a deep, rending sigh.

"Don't be afraid!" cried the figure. "Look at me calmly, steadily. Look!"

And she looked.

She looked and saw that this phantasm of the vanished Peter was clad in the clothes of Paul. The suit of neat grey tweeds hung about his humped and hideous body in loose, shapeless folds, billowing over his boots and dragged up in huge knots and puckers across his warped chest and under his armpits.

"See!" he said. "I am Peter. And yet I am Paul also. Do you understand?"

As he spoke he drew himself upright, and in that instant became Paul. But a dishevelled, slovenly Paul, a Paul such as no one had ever seen, a Paul with rumpled hair and crumpled linen, a disreputable, discreditable Paul.

"Listen, my dear. Listen," he said, and took her two trembling hands in his and drew her down beside him on the window-seat, then enfolded her in his arms and held her tight whilst she fought back to sanity again.

"My dear," he said, "it is marvellous that you should never have even suspected. It was easily conceivable that others might

not suspect, but that you—you who love me——" His voice broke.

"Listen," he said yet again, as if there were some magic of comfort and soothing in the word. "Before I became a journalist I was an actor. As an actor I once played Quasimodo. I found that I had an unusual gift for altering my appearance, my body, every part and aspect of me. I became another man. Those who knew me in private life could scarce believe that it was I who appeared upon the stage as that hideous half-human creature.

"Well, I gave up the stage. I took to writing. At first I lived and wrote in Paris. There I was commissioned by an editor to do a series of articles on the inner life of the Apaches of La Roquette. So I began to frequent their haunts. But that was deadly dangerous work. Very soon I found that even those who were not murderously hostile to me were impossibly shy. It seemed that I should never get to know them as they really were. And then I made a queer discovery. I discovered that those lawless brutes had one vulnerable weakness. They were intensely superstitious. One of their strongest superstitions took the form of an awe of hunchbacks.

"They thought it was lucky to touch a deformed back, as lucky as it was unlucky to mock or injure or molest in any way any deformed person. I seized upon this weakness of theirs and, recalling my success as Quasimodo, went among them in disguise. I went disguised as the person you used to know as Peter Wray. And I went as freely and as safely among them, in that disguise, as if I had been one of them.

"That was the beginning of my masquerade. I had the sheer joy of an artist in it. But there were other reasons why I kept it up. I was trying to be a poet and a politician at the same time. And I found that political editors had no use for poets. Also that literary editors had no use for politicians. As a poet I spoilt my own chances of being taken seriously as a politician, whilst as a politician I spoilt my own chances of being taken seriously as a poet. So I decided to become two altogether different men.

"And I did.

"I carefully cultivated two distinct personalities, purposely making them as unlike each other as possible. I practised constantly to perfect my impersonations. I even cultivated two different handwritings to suit my two different sets of opinions. But I always mistrusted make-up, paint,

Her gaze seemed to fasten on his hand. "His ring!" she said. "You are wearing his ring!"

and powder, wigs, and so on, preferring to rely wholly and solely on my acting. And that has always pulled me through.

"Well, having established two identities, I had to keep them up, even if I had not wanted to keep them up. But I found that two identities were jolly useful to me. I found that as Paul Newell the journalist I could advertise Peter Wray the poet, and that as Peter Wray the poet I could form friendships and go into the society of people who would never have looked twice at Paul the journalist. Thus I scored both ways. And it was—yes, it was most exciting, amusing. And, oh, so easy!

"Ask any of the friends of Peter or of Paul if we were much together, and I think they will answer, rather hesitatingly: 'No, not much,' never realizing—indeed, they would very likely refuse to believe—that they had never seen us together, that no one has ever seen us together, because we are one and the same person. So curiously deceptive is memory! So sweetly unobservant is man! For we more often see what we expect to see than what actually is before us. We more often remember what we would like to remember than what actually occurred.

"And that's all, my dear. How it would all end I never knew. I have been afraid to think. But, you see, you came along, and then one of us simply had to disappear, if either of us was to marry you. And naturally the one to go was the miserable wretch whom you merely pitied but did not love—poor Peter Wray.

"So I killed him. He had served his purpose, he was in the way of my happiness. Therefore he had to be got rid of. Well, he is gone. And I am left, a humble suitor for your mercy and indulgence. Dear Annabel, do you forgive me?"

She was slow to answer him.

"I—I don't know," she faltered at last. "Oh, I don't know. There is something horrible about it all. I—I—you see, if I marry you I shall feel like a bigamist somehow." She paused. "And then—what still puzzles me—what I still can't under-

stand—is why you did not let me into the secret right from the first."

He hesitated, his face flushing and paling. "Yes," he said, "I realize now how stupid—how worse than stupid—how wrong it was of me to deceive you. But what is that French saying? It is the first step that counts. Having taken that first step and finding that I had put myself in a false position by praising myself—praising Peter when I was Paul and Paul when I was Peter—I was afraid to undeceive you. It would have seemed as if I had tried to win you by false pretences. I was so dreadfully ashamed of what I had done. If I had loved you less! And then the farther I went astray the harder it was to get back to the straight path. I had got used to that masquerade. I had found great excitement, a good deal of diversion, in it. And so I was always eager to try the effect of it on every new-comer into my life. If only I had known how dear you were to become to me!" His voice broke. "What a fool I have been!" he cried, bitterly.

He bent his head, hid his face in his hands.

"Dear—dear Annabel," he murmured, "can't you, pitying me, forgive me?"

There was a long pause, during which neither spoke.

Then at last she said, gently: "No, I can never forgive you."

He took his hands from his face, his lips quivering, and stared at her with a darkness of despair in his eyes.

"Oh, but," he implored her, "now that I have told you everything—— They say, you know, that a fault confessed is half redressed. Why—why can't you forgive me the other half of my fault?"

"Because," she said, and now her face was radiant, "because, between people who love one another, there can never be any question of forgiveness."

Solution of David Devant's problem story,

"THE TERRIBLE AUNT."

The problem was, how did the young couple in the story contrive to make their plans for eloping without being discovered by the vigilant Aunt Jane? Only five competitors succeeded in solving it. The solution was best explained by Miss C. T. Roberts, 76, Leyland Road, Southport, as follows:—

"NOTHING simpler," said Arthur. "To begin with, I knew how fond you were of circulars and sale catalogues, and after you had forbidden me to write to Margaret, I determined to use them as the means of communicating with her. Of course it was disobeying you, but then you know, Miss Haynes, 'love laughs at locksmiths,' and Margaret was much too precious for me to give up so easily as that."

Arthur paused and looked fondly at Margaret, who smiled encouragingly at him.

"Well, my dears," said Aunt Jane, "I suppose I must forgive you for deceiving me, and I expect that naughty Mr. Devant was to blame for it, really, but *do* please continue. I am still in the dark as to how you made your plans. Was there invisible writing on the circulars, or what?"

"Not *exactly*," laughed Arthur. "My method was this: Whenever I wanted to write to Margaret I went to a shop and asked for one of their catalogues, saying that I knew a lady who would like one. I asked them to please to wrap it up and address it to you, for you would have known my writing had I addressed it. Then I took it home and wrote my little message to Margaret *in indelible ink on the top right-hand corner* and put the stamps over it! Margaret had only to get the wrappers, tear off the part where the stamps were, soak it in water for a few seconds, pull off the stamps, blot it, and there was my message! And *there* were our plans! I had arranged with Margaret to do this if ever we were forbidden to communicate with each other, and so long as it was summer weather there was no likelihood of your burning the wrappers. How we loved those bulky catalogues which needed so many stamps!

"When the fire at Bude Street Mansions broke out I knew how anxious Margaret would be about me, so I sent you that telegram saying I was quite well, and I couldn't resist the little joke about 'water very useful'—for getting the stamps off, you know!"

Aunt Jane frowned, and then, thinking better of it, burst out laughing.

THE CHEQUE

by

J. J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY S. H. VEDDER

WEARINESS adding to the lines of his handsome austere countenance, Roger Herrick read over the short letter he had just finished, then, in his methodical way, blotted the bold writing and took an envelope from the stand. He dipped his pen—and paused.

Surely it was getting cold! He glanced around his perfectly-appointed study. The fire was still glowing strongly; the heavy curtains covering the three tall windows were closely drawn. With a shrug he settled himself to write the direction on the envelope.

It *was* getting cold! The frost must be tightening its grip out there in the garden. It must be intensely keen to reach, with its breath, the perception of one so abundantly protected and robust as himself. Still, he was growing older, and he was unusually tired to-night. And it was near to three o'clock, the hour at which one's vitality is at the ebb. Also, for hours he had been sitting there, thinking, thinking.

Well, let him finish the business, make himself a discreet glass of toddy, and get up to his well-warmed bed.

From a drawer on his left he brought a cheque-book. His expression gained something in grimness as he filled in the counterfoil neatly, deliberately. And then he proceeded to that which was fated to be the final and, save in one respect, the most futile act of his sixty years.

Pay *Arnold Humber*
Five Thousand Pounds
R. Herrick.

He separated the cheque from its counterfoil and lay back, regarding it. The money was nothing to him. In paying it away he felt neither pleasure nor regret. He only wondered a little wearily whether he had done a wise thing because of the memory of a woman long dead. For it was borne upon him that Arnold Humber, son of that woman, was a creature beyond redemption.

Suddenly he shivered, and once more glanced around the room. Had he not seen his man, Barnes, attend to the windows hours ago, he would have sworn that one of them, perhaps the middle one, which opened on the garden like a door, had been insecurely fastened. And——

Why, Barnes must have been careless after all! The curtains of the middle window had moved—just a stirring, as if to a small current of air.

Herrick sat up preparatory to rising. Confound Barnes!—but perhaps the poor chap was getting too old for his duties.

Again the curtains moved—but scarcely as from a draught. They parted—distinctly they parted, though ever so little—and from between them something protruded—something that gleamed.

"Who's there?" shouted Herrick, his hand going to the bell-push on the table.

His movement was quick, but the bullet was quicker. With a gasp and a grin of agony, he dropped forward upon the sloping desk. . . .

The age of the man who stepped into the light would have been hard to tell; his smooth, pallid face was that of a degenerate. Slipping the long-barrelled pneumatic pistol

Copyright, 1924, by J. J. Bell.

into a pocket within his overcoat, he drew the curtains close, then stole across the pile carpet and softly turned the key in the door, and stood listening. Not that he greatly feared interruption. He was sufficiently familiar with his surroundings to be aware that old Barnes and his wife, the housekeeper, and the servants slept in a distant part of the rather rambling mansion; that the chauffeur had his rooms above the detached garage. He had scarcely expected to find the master of the house awake and in his study, though Roger Herrick was given to sitting late; but he had come prepared for that and other possibilities. No use in taking unnecessary risks.

He switched off all the lights save that with the green shade above the writing-table. For a little while he watched the stricken man there. Not a movement. Still—— From his pocket he brought a knife with a thin, narrow blade—just in case—— He realized that he was perspiring profusely. Sweat was running into his eyes. He wiped his forehead and face.

The clock on the mantel struck softly, and he started. A coal fell, and again he started, and again wiped his forehead. He had not expected that his nerves would be quite so sensitive.

AT last he moved over to the table. For a space he stood gazing down at his victim. Was Herrick dead? How did one make absolutely certain that life had gone?

He stooped and said thickly, hoarsely:—"Mr. Herrick!" He said it thrice, with long pauses between.

He lifted the hand that had almost reached the bell-push, held it a moment, and let go. It just fell. He laid his ear to Herrick's back and listened, holding his breath. Nothing! He put away the knife. Herrick was dead—almost certainly he was dead. Still——

Setting his teeth, he made to raise Herrick's head. Ah, blood! Not so much, though, and the blotter was absorbing it. But with such a wound Herrick was most assuredly dead.

In that instant his eye lighted on the letter, on the envelope bearing his own name. Herrick's head fell back on the desk with a dull sound. Not at once, but when the dizziness had passed, the slayer took up the letter and read the clearly-penned lines.

Arnold Humber,—

After serious, painful consideration I have determined to do that which I refused to do at our meeting this afternoon. Do not imagine that any crazy threats of yours have influenced me. I am not doing this for you. At the same time, for another's sake, I am willing once more to try to hope that, clear of debt, you may yet find that a decent life is worth while, whether lived at home or abroad. I enclose my cheque for five thousand pounds. An acknowledgment is not expected nor desired.

R. Herrick.

In a way it was a harsh letter; yet to one who had slain in hot blood it must have caused some revulsion of feeling. To Arnold Humber it only raised the frantic question, "Did I kill before he could write the cheque?"

Dropping the letter, he searched wildly among the papers visible on the table. Curse it! After all, he would have to revert to his original plan—get the dead man's keys and rifle his safe for what it might contain. And the cheque, its value apart, would have been an irrefutable certificate of innocence; for no man would be suspected of killing another from whom he had just received five thousand pounds!

Humber stood up, clutching at his clammy brows, striving to command his thoughts. But—but the cheque must be there—somewhere! From his concealment he had spied Herrick bring out the book and fill in a cheque. Had Herrick signed it? Humber could not be sure. The writing of the cheque had not interested him then. He had never dreamed—— But the cheque must be there!

No longer shy of blood, Humber once more raised the heavy head. Hah! there it was—payable to himself—signed—yes, signed! God! how near it was to that dark red ooze that spread a little even as he stared—how near to have escaped without a stain! Cautiously he drew to safety the precious slip of primrose-tinted paper. The head fell without his hearing the uncanny sound of contact.

Gripping between finger and thumb the fluttering paper, and breathing hard, Humber staggered to a chair, and sat staring through a mist at those words and figures which meant to him nothing but ease, self-indulgence, escape from honest work. For the man he had murdered he had no feelings at all, except, perhaps, a new resentment. For had Herrick written the cheque twelve hours earlier, Humber could have avoided a deed admittedly ugly and a reaction which seemed likely to break his wretched nerve altogether. That was how Humber felt about it. The blame was on Herrick.

The clock began to chime the quarter, and at the first tinkle Humber sprang up, shuddering. Fool that he was to stay an instant longer than necessary! Now let

him think—let him think! Folding the cheque, he thrust it into his breast-pocket.

The cheque must be presented and cashed before news of Herrick's death could reach the bank. There was no fear of anything appearing in the morning papers. But, moment questioning his right to the money, the bank might, in the circumstances—Humber wished he knew the law on the point—delay payment. And Humber doubted whether he could face delay.

Yet somehow he must face the risk of it—

Herrick's movement was quick, but the bullet was quicker. With a gasp, he dropped forward upon the sloping desk.

supposing the body to be discovered, say, at seven o'clock—then a doctor would be immediately summoned, the police also, and possibly Herrick's lawyer. In the event of the lawyer arriving early, would he be likely to notify the bank at once—perhaps by telephone? It was cutting it too fine, thought Humber, fearfully. Without for a step boldly into the bank, a few minutes after the doors were opened, scrawl his name across the back of the cheque, and confidently slip it under the grille to the cashier. The money once in his possession, he would be ready to meet any inquiries from the lawyer—even from the police. Ah, yes; poor Mr. Herrick had indeed been

generous to the son of an old friend, in difficulties through no fault of his own! Only yesterday afternoon Mr. Herrick had, in his club, presented him with the cheque and much kindly encouragement. (His name, he thankfully remembered, had been entered by the methodical Herrick in the club visitors' book.) Only yesterday—and now his good, generous friend was no more! Aye, with the money in his possession, he could face anything.

And now, where was he? Ah, that letter on the writing-table! He would burn it—it was hardly a testimonial to his honest poverty!—the envelope also. It was done, and there seemed to be nothing more to do. He thought of trying the safe, but to obtain the keys would involve his handling the dead man, and he shrank from that now. He made a careful survey of the table lest he should have left a trace, polished with his handkerchief the parts he might have touched, and afterwards bestowed a similar attention to the door. He took a final look round, not dwelling on the bowed, still figure, felt that the cheque was safe in his pocket, and went by the way he had come, carefully closing curtains and window after him, and so into the quiet, bitter darkness.

He had a long walk before him, for he would not have ventured to take a cab, had such been abroad at that hour, in that outlying part of London. Well on his way, he suddenly wished he had looked for and examined Herrick's cheque-book, just to see whether Herrick had used the counterfoil. On the whole, he rather hoped that Herrick had done so, for a blank counterfoil without its cheque would, in the circumstances, stimulate activity on the part of the police. But either way it mattered little; the cheque would probably be cashed long before the cheque-book was consulted. Nothing there to worry about, he reflected, as he swallowed a couple of tablets, which almost immediately seemed to infuse in him new energy and spirit.

And the cheque-book hung from the table's verge, held between it and the dead man's breast, stained by the trickle of blood that still came slowly down the sloping desk, for the blotter had taken its fill. The cheque-book hung there, ready to fall when the body was moved—to draw attention to itself—to hint at the last act of the dead man—to rouse curiosity—to inspire the question, "Where is the cheque now?"

ARRIVED at his lodgings—his landlady was used to his erratic ways—Humber went to bed, for he was on the point of physical collapse. He did not sleep, and the hours till daylight came were long. How should he take the money for the cheque? How many fives? How many tens? How many hundreds? Which way would seem the least suspicious? Did bank cashiers keep the numbers of all the notes they paid out? Were one-hundred-pound notes easily changed on the Continent? With such questions and speculations his mind was more or less occupied during the dreary inactivity.

But the last hour, when he was up and dressed and ready, was the worst. He spent the time in smoking cigarettes and feeling that the cheque was safe in his breast-pocket. For some vague reason or other—he could not have explained it—he had not looked at the cheque since he placed it there, in the dead man's study. No remorse affected him, but, oddly enough, he shrank more from encountering the dead man's signature than he had done from the dead man himself.

At last it was time to start! A dose of his drug fortified him, and his arrival at the bank was so nicely planned that, though the bank's doors had been open only a few minutes, he was not quite the first person to enter. A man was standing on the steps engrossed in some documents. Humber did not wish to appear too eager. Half-way up he paused and surveyed the traffic for a few moments. A man came out as he went in; another man stood waiting inside, possibly to see the manager; at least, he did not appear to notice Humber.

Humber wished the cashier a polite good morning, brought out the cheque, spread it out, face downwards, on the blotter, and wrote his name—a trifle shakily, maybe, but wholly legibly. Turning over the primrose slip, he blotted it, then passed it under the grille—and in the same moment snatched it back.

Grey of face, trembling, he tottered rather than walked from the bank. In the street he seemed to pull himself together, but his colour remained deathly, for he was looking into the cold, inexorable eyes of ruin. Ruin? Nay, Doom itself!

The cheque must be destroyed—put out of existence—at once, and secretly. But where should he find privacy in this busy street? In desperation he entered a tea-shop and descended to the smoke-room. At that early hour only three customers were there—a fourth came down just after Humber.

Humber went over to a vacant corner and sat down, sweating with fear, with his back to the others. He took out his matches. He drew over an ash-tray. From his side-pocket he brought the crumpled bit of primrose paper. Possibly the horror of the thing had its fascination, for during the next few seconds he sat gazing at Herrick's

Humber struck a match and held the cheque to the little flame.

signature—Herrick's signature, over which appeared a really fine impression of Humber's thumb—in dried blood.

And now, near to weeping, Humber struck a match and held the cheque to the little flame. At the instant of ignition, however, a strong-looking hand came over Humber's right shoulder, rescuing the cheque, while another hand fell—heavily—on his left.

ANNA PAVLOVA

THE DANCER WHO THINKS

BY

Sidney Dark

"WE Russians are very happy in sadness!"

I was gossiping with Mme. Anna Pavlova in her house at Hampstead, hard by the Old Bull and Bush. It is a little ironic that a great dancer whose art is nothing if it is not subtle should have chosen to live next door to the Mecca of rough-and-ready Cockney revelry. The house, however, is admirably well chosen. Its rooms are lofty and spacious and the garden is a thing of sheer delight. But though Pavlova lives in London, she herself, in feature and expression, in temperament and mind, is completely and typically Slavonic. She has the characteristic figure of the dancer—slim, evidently supple, delicately proportioned. But when you talk to her you forget everything but her eyes. They are large and hazel-coloured and mysterious. She gesticulates as she talks, but you hardly notice the gestures. All the time you are looking at her eyes! They intrigue, they excite, they fascinate! You feel that they hide a wilderness of wonderful secrets. They are the eyes of a dreamer, a poet, an artiste.

When Pavlova tells you that no dancer can succeed who thinks only of success, you look into her eyes and you know that she is not just saying the smooth thing that will read well when it is put into print, but that she is telling you the truth as her own life and her own experience have taught it to her. When she speaks with enthusiasm of her art, extolling it as the most beautiful and at the same time the most complex of all the arts, again you look into her eyes to discover the flashing fervour of the fanatic. She is entirely unaffected, eagerly intelligent, a woman who has thought as well as danced, and who, like all real artistes, has deduced from her art a satisfying philosophy.

I had suggested to her that it was strange

that while Russian literature was, for the most part, gloomy and grey and pessimistic, the Russians should have taught modern Europe the real joy of dancing, and she answered me with the words I have put at the beginning of this article.

"We Russians are very happy in sadness. Let me explain what I mean. Here in England people come to me on a cold, rainy day and they say, 'Oh, I am so sad to-day because it is rainy and cold!' But I am never so gay and happy as when the rain is beating on the windows and the sky is covered with clouds. I know that the clouds are there. I can hear the rain. But still I am gay—gayer than I should be if the sun were shining. I am a Slav, and I think that all Slavs are like that. You say that life as it is described by the great Russian novelists, by Tolstoi and Dostoieffsky, by Tchekov and Gorki, is nothing but tragedy and sorrow and disappointment. The great Russian writers are national. I mean that they interpret life as the Russian people feel it. But for all that the Russian people dance.

"We have few illusions about life. We see the clouds and feel the beating rain. But the conditions that would make you English gloomy and sad are regarded by us as inevitable, and we can accept them not only with resignation but even with joy. As I have said, we are very happy even in our sadness."

The Dragon-fly—one of Mme. Pavlova's most popular dances.

In her garden at Hampstead.

The Swan Dance—another great favourite.

Russian art, Russian politics, the submission of the long years under the heavy yoke of Czardom, the excesses that have followed the revolution are all easier to understand when Pavlova's assertion is borne in mind. While she talked, too, I realized the great gulf that separates the matter-of-fact Englishman from the subtle, sensitive Slav, a gulf

Mme. Pavlova's latest dance, inspired by her recent visit to India.

so wide that complete understanding is practically hopeless.

As is well known, Pavlova learned to dance in the famous ballet school which was part of the Imperial Ballet in Petrograd and was heavily subsidized by the Russian royal family. The sins of the Czars were many. They have paid a full price for them, and now their place knows them no more. But it must be remembered to their credit that they gave the world Pavlova and Karsavina and Nijinsky and those wonderful productions and decorations of the Russian ballet that have proved how entirely beautiful the stage (usually so garish) can be made.

Pavlova insists that, though all the dancers taught in the Petrograd school have inherited a tradition and are, of course, heavy debtors to the skill and inspiration of their teachers, she and the other famous Russian dancers have added to their training something that is all their own. This does not simply mean that they have individual charm and a particular genius for graceful and poetic movement, but that, as a result of thinking ballet and dreaming ballet, each of them adds some new charm and grace to the ballet.

The poetry of motion—two studies of Mme. Pavlova taken in her Hampstead garden.

"Dancing," said Pavlova, "is my life. And surely it is not difficult for you to understand how one can become absolutely absorbed in the art that includes so many other arts, for in the ballet you have music, design, colour, and movement woven together by a master hand into one beautiful harmony.

"You wonder why it is that so many famous dancers have come from Russia and why the art of the ballet developed so wonderfully in my country. The reason is that dancing is instinctive with the Russian. Go into a village on a *fête* day and you will see the peasants dancing, not with rude, clumsy movements, but dancing with enthusiasm and abandon and grace. The Russians are natural dancers, just as the Welsh are natural singers.

"The ballet has particularly flourished in two European countries, in Russia and in Italy, and in both these countries the people themselves find appropriate expression for their emotions in dancing when they are glad and even when they are sorrowful. The peasant dances of Italy are original and beautiful, and it was inevitable that Italy should have played a leading part in the history of the ballet.

"There are, of course, good natural dancers in every country. Some of the best dancers in my company, for example, are English and Americans, but it is in Italy and in Russia that, through the habits of the people, the atmosphere exists in which dancing flourishes best.

"The explanation of why one nation succeeds in any art and why another fails must be sought in a study of the different national temperaments. For example, you English used to be afraid all the time to let yourselves go, as you say.

In the new ballet, "Don Quixote."

The Butterfly Dance.

Mme. Pavlova as the High Priestess and Novikoff as the High Priest in the ballet "Dionysius."

Your calmness, reserve, and self-control, all much admired qualities in everyday and home life, form rather a hindrance to the stage artiste, whether he be actor, musician, or singer, whose personality must be given away with both hands.

"You should be allowed to cry when you are sad, and be exuberant in your joy when you feel happy, and not make secrets of either emotion.

"The artiste can have no secrets. On the stage we must be able to use our personalities to indicate every kind of emotion to the audience. It is clear—is it not?—that we can only learn to do this successfully if off the stage we let ourselves go all the time; if we sob when we are miserable and laugh when we are glad.

"It is my impression, upon my return to England after an absence of several years, that the emotional experiences the nation has gone through during the war, the violent changes from joy to sorrow, have done an enormous amount of good towards the development of genuine temperament, and it is the domain of art which will immensely benefit by it. I have noticed this, since I am back, with dancers, musicians, and actors. They feel their art now, and thus make the audience feel it with them."

MME. PAVLOVA finds that English audiences fully appreciate the beauties of her art, and this appreciation exists among all classes. The English delight in the finished picture that they see on the stage, though their character makes it hard for them to paint the picture themselves. I asked her whether in building up and producing a new ballet it is the custom to invent the "plot" first—that is to say, to devise scenes and movements—and then to find music suitable to the pre-arranged scheme. But Pavlova assured me that the music is in every case the foundation on which the ballet is built. She instanced Schumann's "Carnival," round which the Russians created one of their most beautiful ballets. The producer first endeavours to dive into the imagination of the composer and to translate the dreams that made the music into the terms of other arts—into movement and into colour. He must ask himself before he approves of the colour of his scene, the dances of his company, the style of their dresses—"Is this in harmony with the spirit of the music?" It is often a hard question to decide, and it is clear that the ballet producer must possess absolute genius if he is to contrive the harmonies of music colour and movement which have made the Russian ballets so memorable.

"The possibilities of the ballet," said Pavlova, "are infinite. There is no emotion that cannot be indicated by the dancer. A ballet may be tragic or comic, fantastic, even grotesque and bizarre, for the art of the grotesque is both genuine and elusive. But the one thing that dancing must not be is ugly and vulgar."

And Pavlova's eyes shone with resentment at the frequent degradation of her art.

"To me," she went on, "it is horrible that what is called dancing should so often be nothing but a series of meaningless clumsy movements without grace, without beauty, movements that are nothing but just vulgar ugliness. I have seen such 'dancing' both on the stage and in ball-rooms, and it makes me very sad, for think what a nation must lose when it permits an art that can bring with it beauty and joy to lose all its charm and all its significance. We want all the joy we can make for ourselves, do we not? And surely life would be more joyful even in England if the people could be taught to dance beautifully as well as to read and write."

We were walking through Pavlova's practice room as she was speaking. Along one wall of the room is a rail about three feet from the ground, on which the dancer rests her feet to keep her limbs supple. Along the other side is a long mirror in which she can see her movements and by self-criticism struggle through to perfection.

"But, madame," I said, "it is not so easy to dance beautifully."

"Alas, no, monsieur; I myself must still practise for hours every day."

Photographs by Hoppé, Claude Harris, Compton Collier, Able, Moreschi, and the G.P.A.

AN OBVIOUS CASE

By

MARTIN SWAYNE

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

THIS is the story that the little Jew, Isaacson, told me on the *Vallambrosa* as she snored through a glassy sea fifty miles east of the Azores.

"I tell it to you," he began, "because you are the ship's doctor. You must wish to know the illnesses of your passengers." He looked at me anxiously. "Doctors are not always interested in illness. You like to hear about illnesses?"

"I would like to hear about yours."

"To me nothing is more interesting. Illness is extraordinary. It plays such tricks on people. Do we really understand much about illness, doctor?"

"Oh, yes—a great deal."

"I don't mean illnesses like stomach-aches, doctor. I mean queer things that happen—as, for instance, what happened to me. I was very ill. I am ill now, but not so ill as I was. You know Sir Thomas?"

"Which Sir Thomas?"

"Sir Thomas Clay."

Doctors are always assumed to know each other. But I happened to know Clay and said so.

"I consulted him. It was a year ago—a year and two months. My illness had begun some weeks before that. I went to see Sir Thomas. Abrahams, my senior partner—my firm is Abrahams and Isaacson, glassware—said he was the only man worth seeing, but that he was expensive. I did not mind how much he charged, if only he could tell me what was wrong with me. So I got an appointment."

"What was wrong with you?"

"My friends said it was nerves. What are nerves? Simply a word for illnesses that we don't understand—not stomach-aches, doctor, but real illness. I was really ill, but people thought I wasn't, because I had no temperature or spots on me. Nothing you could see. I would sit at home looking in front of me and not speaking. My wife was very good to me. She knew that I was very ill. I used to be always cheerful, and my wife and I would talk in the evenings of the business, or go out to a theatre. But that became impossible. So I sat at home, looking in front of me."

"Were you depressed?"

"No; I was frightened. Everything was unreal."

"Unreal?"

"Yes. If you have never had it, you cannot understand. Everything was unreal." He stared at the sea. "When you go to a cimema, the film seems in a way real. You follow it as if things were really happening. A bad film is simply a film that doesn't give you the feeling it is real. It is only a lot of separate pictures. That is how I saw everything. My business, my friends, my home, wherever I went, it was always just a lot of pictures. Do you know the condition, doctor?"

"I have heard of it. I have never known it as my own experience."

"It is terrible. You can do nothing. You do not want to do anything."

I nodded.

"I went to see Sir Thomas. I tried to explain what I felt. 'Nothing real, Mr.

Isaacson ? ' he said, in rather a squeaky voice. ' That's a bad state for one of your race to get into.' I did not like this, but I only wanted his advice, so I said nothing. Then he asked me what I wanted him to do for me. ' Make things real,' I said ; ' let me see things as they really are.' You know, doctor, I am a simple man and I understand only about business matters. I am not a metaphysician. When I said to Sir Thomas that I wanted him to make me see things as they really are, I meant only that I wanted to see things as I used to see them, and not as flat pictures that seemed unreal. He stared at me for a long time and said nothing. I became uncomfortable. ' Things seem unreal to you,' he said at last. ' And you want me to make you see things as they really are. It's funny you should use those words.' ' Doctor,' I replied, ' make things real for me. I will pay what you ask.' He nodded as if to himself and got up and went to a cupboard which he unlocked. He took out a little bottle. Then he sat down beside his desk and put the bottle in front of him. ' Years ago,' he said, ' a man of your race came to see me. He was a Jew, and had wandered over all the earth. He came to consult me about a very simple matter that I put right for him at once. He was grateful to me, and he came back a few days later to express his gratitude. He gave me this bottle. He said that Western medicine knew many facts, but understood little. In the course of his wanderings he had gained some knowledge. This bottle represented one of the gains of knowledge he had made. He told me that if ever I wanted to understand more than I understood, I should swallow a few drops of this drug. I asked him what it would make me understand. He said that it would make me see things as they really are.' Sir Thomas picked up the bottle and came towards me. ' Here is all I can offer you. I know of nothing else that will do what you ask. I do not even know if this bottle contains a drug that has any powers at all, or if the Jew spoke the truth.' You can imagine my state of mind. I did not know whether to be very angry or not. I thought it best to remain calm. What would you have done, doctor ? "

" I think I would have asked Clay if he had tried the drug on anyone before."

" That's exactly what I did ask. He said that the bottle had remained unopened in his cupboard since the day he had received it. I asked him why he had not had it analysed and what he thought it was. He said it had never occurred to him to have it analysed, and that, in any case, if it was an unknown drug, analysis would be useless. There were many drugs in the world unknown to science, probably, and he had no idea what it was. I told him I disliked drugs and thought they were dangerous things. ' What would we do without them ? ' he said, and he seemed angry with me. ' What would we do without chloroform or morphia ? They make surgery possible. You are a fool to speak like that. I tell you that your condition is incurable.' He turned away and sat down again at his desk. An awful despair came over me. My condition was incurable ! He sat staring at me. ' I am truly incurable ? ' I asked. ' Yes,' he said ; ' there is no cure for your condition. It is chronic.' He tapped the bottle. ' If I were you I would try this.' I did not know what to do. I had received what was worse than a death-sentence. I was quite shattered. I sat bent up in my chair with my head between my hands, unable to think. At length I looked up. ' Let me take the bottle home. I will try to decide what to do later.' He shook his head. ' If you decide to try this drug, you must try it here. I must be present I can prevent anything from going wrong. You can begin with a very small dose, and tell me what you notice.' ' You really think it best to try it ? ' ' Yes,' he said. ' I advise it. I will mix you a small dose.' He went to a table in the corner of the room, on which were standing a bottle of water and a glass. He came back and looked at me with a smile. He looked quite kindly. I felt a little reassured, and took the glass. ' Drink it quickly,' he said. I drank it off. He took the glass out of my hand and sat down at the desk. For some time I noticed nothing."

" What did it taste like ? " I asked.

" It was bitter and harsh on the tongue and throat. I sat staring at the carpet. After a time I noticed that the colours in the carpet were very brilliant in the circle of light thrown by the lamp above my head. I heard Sir Thomas speaking. He was asking me to tell him if I noticed anything. I raised my head and looked at him."

ISAACSON paused, and passed his hand several times over his eyes. Then he turned towards me.

" You must understand that the medicine had already influenced me. I now saw everything through the strange power of this drug. When I looked up at Sir Thomas, I no longer saw a little man, with bright gimlet-eyes and pale face, that seemed a little unshaven, sitting at the desk, clothed in a black morning coat and wearing a bow-tie under a crumpled collar. I still saw the morning coat and the tie and the crumpled collar, but above the collar there was another face looking at me."

Isaacson's voice was so low that I had to bend forward to catch his words.

"You saw another face?" I exclaimed.

He nodded. "You see, the Jew who had given him that bottle had spoken the truth. That drug made me see things as they really are. I no longer saw Sir Thomas Clay."

"What did you see?"

"I saw a rat."

I could not help smiling.

"That sounds a little too familiar to me. The drug must have brought on a state resembling the one produced by long-continued overdoses of alcohol."

He shook his head.

"I know what you mean. I didn't see a rat creeping about on the floor. I saw a man sitting in a chair beside a desk looking at me with the face of a rat. He was speaking to me. I stared at him for a long time. I felt absolutely calm—indescribably calm. It is impossible to give you any idea how calm I felt."

"Then at least you felt better. The drug had done you good."

"Oh, yes." He looked away to the horizon and screwed up his eyes. "I was quite different. I was better, if you like, in myself. But I saw a rat looking at me."

"The drug produced a feeling of well-being in you." I was interested in finding out the physical effects of the drug upon little Isaacson. "That must have been a great relief to you. Did you happen to notice if it caused your skin to perspire?"

"You don't understand," he said, with sudden passion. "You don't believe what I say." He made as if to get up and leave me. I tried to soothe him.

"Your story interests me very much," I said. "Tell me what happened next."

He sighed. "Of course, it's only natural that you won't believe me," he muttered. He sank back into his chair. "But I might as well finish the story. I thought you would understand."

"I'm sure I understand."

Sitting in a chair beside a desk I saw a man with the face of a rat.

"I have no idea if my skin perspired. Don't you see that a thing like that doesn't matter in the least? If a man was describing to you how he fell in love, would you ask him if his skin perspired?"

"I asked the question only from a medical standpoint," I said. "Please do not be vexed with me. What was Sir Thomas saying to you?"

"There was no Sir Thomas. There was only a rat. It was telling lies. Do you know what it was thinking? I knew exactly what it was thinking. It was thinking what it would do if I died from the effects of the drug. It was working out a plan so that everything should seem natural."

"Do you mean Clay was thinking that?" I exclaimed, incredulously.

"There was no Clay. You see, I could only see things as they really were. Sir Thomas Clay had been rolled up like a curtain."

"I think you must have seen things in a very distorted way," I said. "I'm sure Clay wouldn't be like that. He's a queer fellow, but he's quite straightforward."

"Nobody is straightforward," said Isaacson. "It's only an appearance. Isn't it perfectly natural that Clay should have been really wondering what to do if the drug proved poisonous? He didn't know what it was. Therefore he couldn't tell what its effect might be. I knew that clearly by then. Before I took the drug I didn't know it. I thought his knowledge was so great that he could really save me if the drug proved dangerous. Don't think that I'm judging him, or that I felt any repulsion when I sat in his consulting-room looking at this man with a rat's face. I was so utterly calm inside me that I had no fear or disgust or indignation. I merely saw that it was so—that he had this thought and that he didn't care about what happened to me in the least, but only for any consequences that might happen to him. This didn't distress me, doctor. It's the commonest thing that happens in life. You can't understand anything unless you can see these things without the faintest surprise or indignation. The trouble all comes from never being able to see them."

"I think that if this drug makes you see life in this way, it is better that it should be thrown away."

"You are getting angry. But do not worry. The drug has been thrown away. I threw it away myself."

"I'm very glad to hear it."

HE sighed again and was silent for some minutes. I confess that I felt a little roused by so cynical a picture of life. I told him so.

"Yes," he said. "But it isn't cynical, you know. It's you who are cynical."

"Well, let's agree not to quarrel. Let me hear what happened next."

"You make it difficult for me to tell what happened, doctor."

"I promise you I will not interrupt. I am really interested, Mr. Isaacson."

"Well, when I saw this rat sitting in the chair and listened to what it was saying, it seemed to me to be useless to stay any longer. I rose and took the bottle and left the room. It ran after me and tried to stop me. It wanted the bottle, and it was also afraid. When I looked directly at it, it was more afraid. 'If you do not let me go, I will tell people why you did this,' I said. My voice was very calm. It stood aside and I walked out of the house. It couldn't prevent me, because it knew that I knew. It was still light in the streets. It was early summer. The first thing I saw in the street was a dog."

"There's nothing very odd in that," I remarked.

"No. But this dog was dressed very well. It wore a top-hat and evening dress. It was about to get into a motor-car. I supposed it was a doctor. I was in the doctors' area, you know. I think I was in Harley Street or one of those streets near by. I saw that it was a dog quite plainly. It was speaking to the chauffeur in the car. I didn't see the chauffeur. It was a closed car. I understood all about this dog. It is difficult for me to explain to you how this was. I knew, for example, that it delighted to bark and make a noise. It was one of those dogs that like to rush out of the house and go barking down the road. The man in evening dress with the dog's face was barking at the chauffeur. I don't know what he was saying. It didn't matter what he was saying. What he was really doing was simply barking, because he liked to bark. Probably he liked to write to the papers and argue with people, who took him seriously, not seeing him with the eyes that I saw him with. People wouldn't know that he was simply barking—bounding along and barking at everyone. He was quite harmless, but noisy. I met two or three more of these dogs as I walked up the street."

"Do you mean to say that you actually saw these men with the faces of dogs?"

He nodded.

"They were simply dog-faces. You could hear them bark. If you listened carefully you could hear the words they spoke, but it was really barking, you know. The words were only accidental, unnecessary. It was this barking that was necessary. That's what they were really doing. A dog must bark a certain amount."

"Did you see no human faces?"

"None."

"You don't mean to imply, of course, that there are really no human beings?"

"I don't want to imply anything, doctor. I'm only telling you what I saw. I saw things as they really are."

"Are you going to suggest to me that there are no human beings?" I exclaimed. "It's an intolerable idea. It's absurd. You might as well say that if a supernatural being were looking at the earth, he would see no human beings on it but only animals! It's ridiculous! It's a most scandalous reflection upon mankind, Mr. Isaacson."

He threw up his hands.

"You are angry again."

"Naturally. Every right-minded man would be."

"But I have not said what you impute to me. There may be many human beings. I only tell you what I saw, and I only saw a small percentage of all the people in the world." He smiled slightly and looked at me. "I didn't see you, doctor."

"No," I said, "I'm glad you didn't." I reflected that I did not quite understand what I meant by saying this, so I spoke again. "It is often possible to see faint traces of resemblance to animals in people's faces, and I fancy this drug merely emphasized these traces, and so produced caricatures of people. To say that a man who looks faintly like a rat is actually a rat is a grotesque statement."

"I don't say that because a man or woman looked slightly like an animal they looked that animal entirely, when looked at through the power of this drug. I knew for a fact that it wasn't so. I saw my wife, for instance. When I got home I saw her sitting in a chair by the window. She had the face of a cow. She doesn't look in the least like a cow ordinarily. But she was a cow. I tell you it was unmistakable. She sat there, at the window, wearing a crimson dress. Above the dress was a cow's face. It was chewing the cud. When she was speaking—she used to speak a great deal, but she didn't chatter—it was the cow chewing the cud. Now the woman who lived in the flat below ours, whom I had met on the stairs, had the face of a parrot. But she was always chattering and liked to call out in a loud voice. We used to complain about her, because we could hear her in our flat—always calling down the passage below us. And even when she was speaking in an ordinary way to her husband in the evening, she would raise her voice so that it sounded as if they were quarrelling. But I understood at once why she did this when I saw her face. She was a parrot. All her words were nothing—of no importance. She had to call out, to scream, to chatter, because she was a parrot. She didn't say things for the sake of saying things, but because she had to make certain noises. It was just the same with the dogs I saw in Harley Street. They had to bark. They didn't speak because of the meanings they wanted to express in their words, or really because they had anything to say, but because they had to make certain sounds. Can you understand what I am trying to tell you?"

"You are apparently trying to tell me that what people say to each other has no meaning at all, but is really done in order to make a number of animal noises."

"Yes," he said, eagerly. "That's what I saw as clearly as you see those flying fish hit the water over there. It's a most extraordinary revelation. When we ordinarily talk we seem to be talking because we have something to say, or because the other person has said something. We can't believe that we are simply barking or squeaking or croaking or neighing or crowing or snarling or roaring or buzzing, can we?"

"No. And we aren't, Mr. Isaacson. Man is a rational being. He talks sense."

"Do you think so? People talk all day long. Hundreds of millions of people, for thousands of years, have talked all day, but nothing seems to change, does it? When I was under this drug I saw that everyone was really barking or squeaking or hissing, and that nothing could possibly happen because it meant nothing. That woman in the flat below us, for instance, was simply being a parrot. And her husband, by the way, was a lizard. He simply flicked out his tongue. It was absurd to see them together. They had nothing in common really. What has a parrot to do with a lizard, or a lizard with a parrot? But I saw this absurdity everywhere in people who lived together. They really had no connection with each other. You could see dogs living with cats and bulls living with birds and snakes living with horses and elephants with mice. You can't even faintly realize what a world you find yourself in when you have the power that this drug gives you of seeing things as they really are. All the dramas and tragedies, the passion and despair, all the grand reforms and ideals and enthusiasms, the flags flying and drums beating, all the important things that people worry about and are hurt over and struggle for—the whole thing, doctor, that you call life is all nonsense. All sheer nonsense, when you see these parrots and elephants and mice and dogs jumping about in human dress and uttering their cries. My dear doctor—my dear doctor!" He looked at me with such strange eyes that the

indignant protest that was on my lips died away.

"I AM a Jew," he continued, "and as a Jew it is my nature to believe strongly in what I do. It is natural for us to take a strong hold of things, to think concretely, as it is called, and seeing is believing for me. Until I became ill, I was thoroughly sane in everything, You understand what I mean? When I became ill, this solid belief in things got a knock, for everything seemed a flat picture. But when I took that drug my eyes were opened to what the reality of things means. No one could stand the reality of things, and how people cry out for it as if it were a desirable possession!" He laughed a little. "I could stand it because the drug made me so calm. All I felt was the strange obviousness of it all. I wondered how I'd never guessed it before. Do you know, doctor, that we turn down most of our best thoughts—the thoughts that come nearest to the truth, I mean?"

"I am not going to argue with you, Mr. Isaacson," I said. "Life appeared to you like this. That is all I will agree to. That it is like this does not follow. In different moods life takes on different hues."

"But I wasn't in a mood. A mood passes. I was fixed deep in—in——" He stopped. "I don't know how to describe it. I was anchored in something unchangeable."

"It was the drug. While its influence lasted you felt in a certain state. That's all."

"Very well," he said. "Let that be the explanation. The effect of the drug lasted for an hour. But in that hour I had seen more than I could write in a thousand books. It passed away rather quickly. My wife and I had gone out to have some dinner. At the table next mine were sitting two women and a man. The man had the face of a monkey. One of the women was a fox and the other was a hawk, with cold motionless eyes, with a kind of membrane that kept flickering across them. I was watching them when I began to notice that they had a misty appearance, and then quite suddenly I saw a young man talking very animatedly to two women, one of whom was smiling at him and the other laughing. It was like being born into another world. My wife was speaking about Sir Thomas. I had told her that I had got some medicine from him. She was talking about some medicine she had had from a doctor some years ago that had done her a lot of good, only the prescription had been lost and the doctor had died, so that it could never be repeated. She went on speaking slowly and with frequent pauses about the medicine. It seemed quite natural."

"But how did you feel in yourself?" I inquired. "Did you notice that you felt any better?"

"Not just then. You see, doctor, I had so much to think about that I didn't really notice how I felt. We returned to the flat, and my wife went to bed early. I remained alone in the sitting-room. I began to wonder what I looked like. I wanted to know what animal I really was. I tried to think, but you know how that kind of thinking about yourself never gets you anywhere. Besides, you make mistakes. You exaggerate one way as much as the other. I thought of giving a dose of the drug to my wife and asking her what she saw when she looked at me. But I was afraid—not only at what she might see, but in case the drug might affect her disagreeably. Besides, did I wish my wife to know what I knew? Frankly, I did not. She lived a very simple, placid existence. She was mildly curious about life, and sometimes expressed a desire to know more. But that was all. To gain the insight that the drug gave was not what she would wish. I've often heard people clamouring to know more and complaining that life is obscure. If they knew what price you must be willing to give in order to know more, they wouldn't clamour, perhaps. But I don't know if I put it correctly. It's very difficult to talk clearly about these questions. In any case, I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't give my wife any of the drug."

"It must have been a shock to you to see her as a cow," I remarked, a little sarcastically.

"No. It wasn't a shock. I'm not sentimental or romantic, doctor. I never thought her an angel. I've always looked on marriage as I do on business, or anything else in life. It has to be made to work. And a cow is an easier animal to live with than a parrot." He smiled to himself. "After I knew that woman in the flat below was really a parrot, I never got angry with her. What would be the use of going into the parrot-house at the Zoo and getting angry because there were parrots screaming at each other?"

"None at all," I said. "But a human being should be better than a parrot."

"Ah! *Should* be, perhaps. But that's another side of the question that I know nothing of. I'm only describing what I saw. I was very anxious to know what I really was, and after deciding not to give any of the drug to my wife, I thought of my senior partner, Abrahams. But he was not suitable. The experience might have been dangerous for him. It suddenly occurred to me that if I took another dose of the drug and looked at myself in the mirror,

At the table next mine were sitting two women and a man. The man had the face of a monkey. One of the women was a fox and the other a hawk.

I might see what I really was. I fetched the bottle and poured out five drops of the drug and mixed them with a little water. I knew after I had swallowed it that I had taken rather more than Sir Thomas had given me, because the taste was more bitter and the harshness on my tongue greater. In a few moments I noticed, as I had noticed before, that the colours of things in the room became more distinct. There was a mirror over the mantelpiece. I walked slowly towards it, and then suddenly looked at myself."

He stopped and, getting up, leaned with his back against the rail, looking down at me. His dark, sallow face was thrown into strong relief by the glare of sunlight over the sea.

"Did you ever see yourself in a mirror without recognizing it was you?"

"I think I have, but only for the fraction of a second."

He nodded.

"It's a strange feeling, isn't it? But immediately you recognize yourself it passes. 'Of course, that's me,' you say, as it were. Well, when I looked into the mirror I couldn't say that. I didn't know that I was looking at myself. I only concluded I was because when I moved the thing in the mirror moved, and when I lifted my hand it did so. So I had to conclude it was me. But I didn't believe it was me. When you have to conclude that something is so, you don't believe it. A conclusion isn't a taken-for-granted fact. I turned away from the mirror and tried to believe that thing I had seen was me. But I couldn't. I looked again. It was still there. I said to myself that I would get used to it in time and then I would believe and know it to be myself. So I kept staring at it. I saw it staring at me. I tried smiling at it. It drew its lips back."

"Were you frightened?"

"No. But I wasn't quite so calm as I had been. I was disturbed, distressed—uncomfortable. I suppose I was disappointed. You know the feeling you have when you're a boy and think you've done well in an examination, and then find you've come out low down on the list. There you are—away down there, with two dozen boys above you! It's the unalterability of it that's so chilling. A sort of cold disastrous feeling. I remember having had it once. It knocks something out of you for the time.

That was how I felt. There I was, far down on the list."

He became silent.

"What did you see in the mirror?" I asked at last.

"A rabbit."

He straightened himself and pulled out the creases in his white duck jacket. Then he took out a cigarette and lit it.

"Let's go and have a drink, doctor."

I got on to my feet and looked at my watch. It was just after noon. I had to go and see a sick woman in the second-class quarters.

"I'll have a drink later," I said. "Did you take any more of the drug?"

"No. I poured it down the sink. I'd seen enough."

Without saying another word, he went down the companion-way to the deck below. I could see he regretted having told me his story. After I had been to the second-class quarters, I went into the saloon. He was sitting by himself. I sat beside him.

"Isaacson," I said, "I'm very glad you told me that story."

"You won't tell anyone?"

"No."

He seemed relieved. I watched him. He seemed to be thinking deeply. There was a somewhat frail look about him, and the expression of his face was very gentle. I had a kind of liking for him.

"You say you're better than you were?"

"Yes."

"How do you account for that?"

"I think it's because I understand more, doctor. I think that illnesses like the one I had are cured only by understanding more. Instead of being ill, you have sadness instead."

This observation arrested me. I understood the funny look in his eyes. It was not really funny at all. It was sad. He had uncommonly sad eyes.

I walked slowly towards the mirror, and then suddenly looked at myself.

'Did you ever see Clay again?" I asked a little later.

"No. But I wrote to him and sent a cheque for fifty guineas. I told him the medicine had done me good and that I had finished it. I never heard from him. The cheque was cashed."

"If I ever see him, may I tell him what you told me?"

He smiled.

"If you can, doctor."

I reflected a moment.

"It would be rather difficult," I murmured.

He darted a swift look at me.

"Of course, doctor, I didn't tell you a hundredth part of all I saw." He called the steward and gave an order. Then he turned to me rather shyly. "What's your opinion, doctor?"

"Of your experience?"

He nodded. His eyes were fixed with an eager watchfulness on mine.

"Why, my opinion is easily expressed," I said, looking at him. "You had an hallucination."

His face fell. He bit his lip. Then he made a gesture with his hands and sat looking at the floor.

"Every drug tends to produce hallucination," I continued. "Some drugs interfere with time, some with space, some with form. This drug produced a special kind of hallucination of form. That's all." The steward brought our drinks. After a long silence, Isaacson handed me mine. He lifted his glass.

"*Salut*, doctor."

We drank. He put down the glass and walked quickly out of the saloon. For the rest of the voyage he was always quite polite, but he never spoke with me again. I was sorry, because there was something interesting about him. But what else could I have said to him? The more I thought over his story, the more obvious was it to me that my verdict was right. It was simply hallucination—a most obvious case.

"UPON THE RECORD MADE."

by

Edwin Balmer

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

THE spectacle was superb—the gleaming, frost-sheathed pinnacle of the mountain with the figures of three men, dark in dress, sharply etched against the sheer face of the topmost rocks. In estimates of altitude above sea-level they had reached a height of some twelve thousand feet, with apparently less than half a thousand more to ascend before winning the very peak of Tecla, the loftiest in all that sky. As the railway pass gained elevation of less than a mile, the three climbers were a mile and a half above the immediate valley.

The first stretch of the ascent was sloping rough rock in which clung tall spearlike pine-trees; then showed snow, through which the pine protruded. Now, as one looked farther up, distance dwarfed the trees, stunted and thinned by the height and cold, till the green and black points of the pine ran out and the snow-crusted slope lifted white to a bit of glacier above which, abruptly like a wall, the mountain rose almost perpendicularly for five hundred or seven hundred feet, with only a crag here and a crack or crevice there where snow could lie. Then, once more, the strata shelved; snow and ice packed in between greater irregularities of rock, sloping away to the final rise to the summit, which again was a wall too steep to hold snow; too smooth and sheer to support ice heavier than the frost-sheath glittering everywhere the sun glanced down; altogether impossible of ascent by human feet—one would say—except that now three men had climbed it. For there they were, far, far above the highest shelf, with the frightful abyss of naked icy rock below.

The sight made Margaret Ramsay suddenly shrink and shiver with fright for them as she saw them from her window in the train puffing through the pass.

It was plain to her that the climbers appreciated the tremendous peril of their position; for the field-glasses which Margaret held to her eyes were powerful enough to show that they proceeded only by short separate shifts of hand and foot, and so slowly and cautiously that it was difficult to determine, in a minute's observation, whether they were now climbing or coming down.

"They're descending, I think," she decided, taking a full breath as she lowered the glasses and looked down at her companion in the opposite seat.

Walter Bateman took the binoculars, and stared at the three men far away on the pinnacle of the sky.

"No," he said, impatiently, "the fools are still climbing."

"Fools, Walter?" Margaret gently reproached.

"They shouldn't do it!" he insisted. "What do you call them, Margaret?"

"Splendid men to get where they are. Besides, dear, any minute they may fall——"

"And of the dead you should speak only good. Yes; I see, Will-o'-the-Wisp. They

certainly have good nerve, your splendid men," he admitted, as he put down the glasses. "Now come back to me, you little Will-o'-the-Wisp!" he invited, putting out his arms to her fondly.

Her joy would be to obey; indeed, she wondered amazedly why she hesitated. For now he was to be hers and she was to be his. Only upon this day, in the morning five hours ago, he had asked and she had promised love—love of which she had dreamed to herself, in all hopelessness, for seven years.

"Those men up there, Walter!" She turned her eyes again to the mountain top.

"What about them now, dear?"

"If they fall! Look at the valley."

"Yes; they've not much chance."

"I don't mean only that. It's wild—absolutely deserted—through here. I don't think, except on this train, there's anyone else within miles. So, if they fall——"

"Oh, they won't fall. They're roped together, you may be sure." Since she would not come to him, he gazed up where she was looking.

"The rope's more of a danger than a help now," Margaret said, wetting her lips, which went dry while she watched. "If one fell, he'd drag down the others. None of them have anchorage."

"Anchorage, Will-o'-the-Wisp?" He looked at her in surprise at her use of the word.

"I mean a strong enough position to hold up by the rope another who slips."

"I know; but where did you find out?"

"At Chamonix. When father was alive, I once went half-way up Mont Blanc."

"You did! When?"

"When I was fifteen; long before you cared where I was or——" she replied, but kept her gaze fixed on the mountain.

"I always cared, Margaret. Aren't those men all right now?"

"They're roped together," she said, raising the glasses again to her eyes. "And they're trained climbers. They move, you see, only one at a time; the other two brace themselves and wait their turn. They're attempting a traverse over smooth rock without any sort of good holds. The man on the end seems to have his hands in some sort of a crack; but he's support for only one foot. The others hang! Oh! oh!"

"What is it?"

"Can you see? The man in the middle slipped! But they caught him! They're holding him! Walter, I can see him kick, trying to find a crack for his toes. There, he's got it. Oh!"

"Give me the glasses," Walter commanded, and took them from her as she sank back, gasping and weak from what she had witnessed. "They seemed only a few hundred yards away," she breathed. "Those are wonderful glasses."

"I got them," said Walter, "in a German observation post; they'd belonged to a staff officer; the best to be had. They seem quite all right up there now." He held the excellent glasses to his own eyes. "They're resting; now going on——" he reported while she sat, not looking up, but watching him while he observed the mountain top.

SUDDENLY he ceased to speak: his hand jerked and a spasm contracted his lips.

"Walter, what is it?"

He did not answer, so she spun to the window; but the train roared into a tunnel; all was black outside. In the darkness she felt his hands drawing her to him and he kissed her; but she, at that moment, could not forget herself to love. "What was it you saw, Walter?"

The train ran out of the tunnel; but though light was about the car again, it came down a deep defile and a great rocky spur shut off sight of Tecla.

"Nothing, Margaret," he tried to reassure her.

"No; you saw something happen! Someone slipped a few minutes ago?"

"No; not that!" he denied. "They're undoubtedly all right now."

"How do you know? Did you see them steady themselves again?"

"I'm sure they're all right, dear."

But she bent below the window in a vain endeavour to see over the spur. "I wish we could have stayed back there," she said, as the train continued in the defile and curved so close about the base of Tecla that the summit could not be seen until, many minutes later, it suddenly appeared in a new place.

"Walter! the men are gone! They've fallen!"

"Dear, you wouldn't see them from this side!"

"No; we see the place where they were above the glacier! See the sun upon it, and the men aren't there!"

"Couldn't they be behind a shoulder of rock or in a cave?"

"I believe they fell while we couldn't see them! Give me the glasses!"

"Why?"

"To see if I can find them."

"I'll look!" And he raised the glasses again.

She waited an instant till—senselessly, perhaps—she felt he was not searching, and she turned her own unaided eyes upon the mountain. "Walter, give me the glasses!"

"Give me the glasses," Walter commanded, and took them from her as she sank back, gasping and weak from what she had witnessed.

Her slender hands seized them from him and she directed them, not at the summit nor at the sheer rock face, but lower at the shelf of ice and snow and rock where she had spied, at the top of the upper snow, two dark sliding things.

Immediately the glasses gave them to her vision as human forms; dead, undoubtedly. Nothing in their slow spin down the snow-field suggested a relic of animation. They had fallen perhaps three hundred feet—perhaps farther or not so far; it was impossible to estimate—and, striking against crags during the fall, they had plunged probably lifeless upon the snow. Then they had begun to slide down the ledge. Though she believed the men dead, yet Margaret gasped at the thought of them plunging again from the edge of the shelf.

Now a splinter of rock arrested them; rather it evidently entangled the rope which still bound the bodies; for both ceased to slip, and after them came crawling—yes, crawling and creeping, not lifelessly sliding—a third figure which crouched over his companions' bodies; then, raising an arm, he tried to signal—to signal to the train!

"Walter, one of them's alive!"

"What? Margaret, impossible!"

"Stop the train!"

"Let me see!" He reached for the glasses, but the train was in another defile which snatched them from sight.

"Walter, they fell!"

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

"But one of them is living! Aren't you going to stop the train?"

He started up, but she did not wait for his action. She flung open the door and seized the signal cord running the length of the car and dragged it down; but as she grasped it, she was conscious that another hand, somewhere forward, was pulling upon it. The engine blew a blast of warning acknowledgment; the brakes rasped on and the train screamed and scraped to a halt below a rocky embankment. Doors opened, and all along the train passengers emerged and trainmen mixed with them.

"Who stopped the train?" the conductor inquired.

"That's what I want to know," Margaret replied. "I was trying to when someone else did. Who is he?"

Walter was beside her; his hand grasped her arm and he half supported her as she climbed the embankment; but he said no word to her, and she said nothing to him; she did not even look up at him. The man whom she sought—and whom Walter helped her find—was a young man with nothing in his appearance to distinguish him from the others who had flocked from the train. She was vaguely aware that he had been a fellow-passenger for some time; that is, she had occasionally passed him in the dining-car or on her way through the sleepers; but he had made so slight an impression that she had no idea where it was that he had got on. Evidently, from the inconspicuous insignia in his buttonhole, he had been a soldier, and plainly he had kept himself in active trim. He was of about Walter's age, Margaret thought.

"Four men," he was saying to the conductor, "who are in good condition and know something about climbing."

"I have climbed." Margaret heard Walter offer himself quietly; and he loosed his hold on her arm.

"I've climbed, too," Margaret announced to the stranger. "You need mountain knowledge as well as strength," she defended her offer. "I know rock climbing; I can go up a chimney crevasse. I've been halfway up Mont Blanc."

"Margaret!" Walter said, clasping her arm again. "Margaret!"

"Yes," said the stranger, not rebuking her offer nor accepting it. "We shall want men with knowledge of rock climbing." And he gazed from the group about him to the mountain.

FROM the top of the embankment they could plainly see the height and distinguish its dangers more definitely than from the train. A precipitous gorge, ugly enough in itself, gaped between them and even the base of Tecla; above it the forested slope betrayed itself to be treacherous; and then rose the snow and ice to the first steep rock-face; impassable. It argued nothing that the three men who had fallen must somehow have ascended that rock. Had they not fallen from similar rocks higher? Moreover, the warmth of the sunshine of the May afternoon already was beginning to sharpen with the chill of evening. Cold soon would come, with temperatures well below freezing; and twilight, too, though darkness there in the north would be delayed.

"We must allow six hours at least to reach them," the stranger was saying. "Six more to return, if we're carrying someone. But there'll be a moon to-night."

To carry someone down that great rock wall! Of course, the only object of an expedition to that shelf was to return carrying someone; but it seemed that few of the passengers had thought about that. The prospect of the climb, unhindered by helpless weight, had been enough to appal them after having just witnessed a fall.

"Surely they left a relief party, who must be starting for them?" someone said.

"Where?" Walter asked; it was his first word since Margaret had offered herself.

One by one the passengers dropped away till there remained about the man who had stopped the train only a couple of officials and Margaret and Walter, until a group of homeseekers and immigrants came back from beside the tourists' sleepers. One of these—a stocky, hardy-looking man of about thirty—addressed Walter.

"My name, monsieur, is Gampel. I am a Swiss on my way to the Babines; from Zermatt. I have not been a registered guide, but I think I can climb that mountain."

"He," said Walter, nodding to the stranger, "will be in charge of us."

"My name is Milrane." The stranger gave the Swiss his hand; and shook hands, now, with Walter. "Anyone else?" he appealed to the rest.

"Can't you use me?" Margaret begged of Milrane, and when he shook his head, she turned to Walter. "I will go on my own account as far as I can."

"I know you will," he said, and turned to Milrane to aid him with preparations. "I'll see to the blankets from the sleeping cars," he offered. "Food and whisky, too. Fuel alcohol to melt snow, conductor; so we'll ask you for a kettle."

"How about a rope?" Milrane said.

The conductor promised one, and a wreck axe for ice work, as Margaret slipped away to the baggage-car to make her own preparations.

TWENTY minutes later the train had proceeded; it was to halt again at the first siding a few miles farther on to slip a sleeping car in which Anne—Margaret's maid—would stay and four or five other men and women who could not climb; but who wished to constitute themselves a base party to await the return of the climbers.

Clad in her warmest jacket and in woollen riding trousers, with puttees enwinding her slim legs and in her stoutest boots, Will-o'-the Wisp followed Walter Bateman, who followed Milrane across the gorge; Gampel, the Swiss, came last and completed the mountain party. Each man packed a pair of blankets, besides a share of the supplies. Milrane and Walter bore axes; the Swiss, the coiled rope. Except for a sharpened staff, Margaret travelled light, swinging from her shoulders only the case containing the excellent binoculars which Walter had taken from a German observation post. At the first halt in the gorge the glasses showed that the man on the ledge, who had signalled with his arm, had recently altered his position; evidently he was still alive, though now prostrate on the snow; so the relief party pressed on, encountering on the lower slopes of Tecla greater difficulties than they had suspected there. Nevertheless, they took little time to rest and expended small effort in talk together; and Margaret, at least, found herself without spare energy even for consecutive thought.

Perhaps she did not want to think; perhaps her mind was putting off and off the conclusion which, if examined, must seize hold of her. This was that Walter had wished to avoid this expedition; he was here on the mountain just in front of her because she was behind; if she had not been on the train, and had not stopped it, he would have gone on. He—Captain Walter Bateman, with his record of disregard of self in battle, with his honours for bearing off wounded under fire!

No; there must be something she had not taken into account; this could not be! Yet, even before that moment when those men on the mountain fell, she was realizing he was somehow less than he had been. Certainly less than she had believed him. She now could recognize that her reluctance to return to his arms, when he had invited her back, had been only partly from her apprehensions for the men on the mountain; in part, at least, a sensation of disillusionment had supplied her impulse to refuse him.

While they halted for a breathing space after reaching the snow-line, and while they stood together a little apart from Milrane and Gampel, and yet with no words for each other except the ordinary commonplaces of the climb, she wondered if she had carried into her womanhood the estimate of him with which the child had been satisfied; if, when he had returned to her after his years at war, she had loved and become betrothed to him thoughtlessly, like a child, and if he never had been more of a man than now.

If he had been, what had changed him? The war? That, of course, had been his most tremendous experience; and he had come through it with honour second to no other young man. How could the war have made him less?

"We're ready?" Milrane asked.

They continued the ascent; and again, mercifully, the effort obstructed thought. She was conscious that she too soon was spending her strength; conscious, too, that the men were permitting it, for they had no idea of allowing her to attempt the final climb. At the end of the region of mere effort and at the beginning of danger they would leave her.

Before eight o'clock they gained the glacier and crossed it upon the cut steps in the ice and snow crusts which must have been made that morning by the men who

had fallen. The sun, somewhere off the other side of Tecla, was still glowing, but was very low and swinging far to the north; warmth was gone from the red rays, which cast huge purple shadows to the east and south; the light stained blood-red the pointing peaks and incarnadined the clouds which materialized from nothing with the night. It became very cold in the shade of Tecla and the air was rare and biting and elusive to the lungs; and now, abruptly, rose the sheer naked rock, five hundred feet or more to the ledge where the fallen men lay.

So steep it was that, when Margaret looked up, she could not see the line of the ledge at all; the bare rock seemed to rise, almost unsloping, into the ruddy sky. She took off her glove and touched the rock and found it chill with a veneer of ice here and there. For the noonday sun had melted the snow above and sent down trickles which had frozen.

Turning, she found the men tossing off their blankets and packs to prepare for this final climb; and she saw that the Swiss, as he looped the rope, allowed for the girdling of three waists only. So, sparing herself useless appeal to be allowed to proceed, she obtained the spirit lamp and kettle and set to making tea.

"Hullo!" Milrane shouted up the mountain. "Hullo! Hullo!"

He received no answer but echo; and Gampel, who produced a revolver, fired a shot. This started down a little shower of rotten rock and ice bits. "Suppose he's dead up there?" Milrane addressed Walter. No one held any idea that more than one man might be alive.

"Maybe," said Walter. "Or he may be unconscious. If he's not, he knows now we're coming for him."

"Yes," said Milrane. "So we've got to take the chance." He walked over to the wall and looked up it. "I wish we had ice-irons."

"We have tea," said Walter, waiting for Milrane and Gampel before sitting down on the blanket beside Margaret.

"When I saw those fellows fall just before——" Milrane was starting when Walter, as though not hearing, began talking.

"Tea isn't bad stuff," he said. 'But I never could drink it much till I got to France. We found some in a German dug-out—division headquarters we captured up beyond Rheims—which was old China tea; the general's last private stock, I guess. That was quite a place. Did you see those headquarters' dug-outs, Milrane? You got overseas?"

'Yes," said Milrane. "I was in the second division."

"Then you saw your share of action."

"Yes," Milrane admitted.

"Then you also," said Margaret, "were at the Marne; Château Thierry! At St. Mihiel; in the Argonne!"

Milrane nodded and bent for a sandwich from the box between him and Gampel. "I was saying," he said, "that I thought when I saw them fall just——"

And once more Walter stopped him by swift comment on the war and kept the talk overseas until Margaret was putting away the kettle. They shouted again up the mountain in the hope of reply before they started the rock-climb; then Gampel set to tying the rope about Milrane, and Margaret followed Walter as he examined the rock they were about to ascend.

THE sun was gone, but the long northern twilight endured and over the eastern peaks there hung a half moon; in this light Margaret saw Walter's face as he looked up the deadly rock, and she knew that now, if Milrane and the Swiss faltered or if—half-way up—they turned back, he would go on alone; and she knew that to this she had driven him. Suddenly she seized his arm and clung to him in a spasm of emotion.

"I had no idea it was like this, Walter!"

"Why—why, Will-o'-the-Wisp!" He patted her hand.

"Don't. I can't bear it!"

"All right," he said, and loosed himself from her and walked a little away. "I've this to tell you, Margaret," he said when he came back. "Those men fell before the train went into the tunnel; Milrane saw it then; I saw it too. That's what he was about to mention when I stopped him." He turned from her to the others. "Ready for me, Gampel?"

"Ready, monsieur."

So the next minute they started up, roped together and bearing one pair of blankets to make into a sling to carry down a helpless man.

For a while she stood below the point of their ascent, watching and listening to the scrape of their climbing. Words dropped to her now and then—ejaculations, grunts of warning or advice, and occasionally a brief debate. Then the three were better to be seen from farther back, so she withdrew to the abandoned blankets and packs, where she had promised to remain. During the first hundred feet above the glacier they had climbed by moving in unison; but now she saw that the nature of the rock forced them to different tactics; one man at a time was in motion; the others braced

themselves in readiness to hold him with the rope. When they were about two hundred feet up, they evidently came upon a stretch of particularly "rotten" rock; as they felt for hand-holds they showered down jagged bits, and after attempting a traverse to the right they had to descend several lengths before finding a practicable climb to the left.

The twilight at last was gone; frequently the new night-clouds floated before the moon, but much of the time Margaret could see fairly well through her glasses. When the men were about four hundred feet above her, she observed that they had halted longer than usual and seemed to argue. Soon she heard a voice—Milrane's, she thought—in hullos.

When she answered loudly, Walter shouted down to her, "All right," and she knew that Milrane had not called to her, but had been trying for evidence, before continuing that desperate ascent, that someone was alive above. She could not tell whether they got an answer from overhead; but after a few moments she saw them struggling slowly upward.

Half an hour later, one man disappeared from the rock; a few moments later the second also vanished, to be followed by the third, and Margaret knew they had gained the sloping shelf of snow and rock upon which the three still figures lay. She could not get sight of the slope unless she retreated far down into the valley; but she could tell that Walter and his companions were still climbing, for snow chunks and ice came down; these ceased, and she knew that they had halted.

APPARENTLY they stayed in one spot for quite a time. Vainly Margaret watched the edge of the shelf; she moved about, stamping and beating her arms. If she was chilled, how cold must they be, cramped and tired with climbing! When she put a blanket about her, she thought of the railway and looked down. The siding, where the car was to have been left, was not in sight from that point, but she saw a great bonfire, burning probably for a beacon; she saw a train, east-bound, creeping through the pass. It stopped near where Milrane and she had halted their train; apparently it let off some people; for after the lighted cars vanished, another bonfire blazed below.

A tiny avalanche of snow and ice and rock announced that the men were moving again on the upper slope; and far, far up that deadly vertical rise of ice-sheathed rock a man reappeared and began to descend; behind him was let down, not a human form, but a great cocoon-shaped thing; and Margaret knew that they had found someone alive and were bringing him down slung in the blanket. In the moonlight, and at that height, she could not see the rope; but she could tell from the guiding movements that a line ran from the cocoon to the man below, and that the two other men, who now appeared above, supported the weight of the helpless man from the rope at their waists.

Margaret abandoned the blankets and stood motionless, looking up; it seemed to her that the man who guided the descent was smaller than the others—therefore he was Gampel; she could not distinguish between the two who were sustaining the inert burden. Indeed, it made little difference which was Walter; if one fell, all must fall; and their chance of safe descent with that burden was desperately slight.

She knew that Walter thoroughly realized it when he had left her; otherwise he would have put off his parting confession to another time. But he could not die, having deceived her. Those last words of his, making admission to her of fault, tortured her with ecstasy of unbearable rapture. Never in all her dreams of love had she imagined coming so close to him as at that instant when he asked for her forgiveness before turning away to flout death at her bidding. With what wild heedless arrogance had she goaded him; with the reproach of her own action when he did not stop the train; by the way she ignored him and sought a stranger and offered herself to him.

As a result she knew that not alone Walter's fate would be upon her when the probable occurred, but Milrane's and Gampel's also. For though at the train and still at the glacier Milrane was the leader, she knew that it was Walter who forced the climb on beyond that deadly point above where Milrane had halted to shout.

They were reaching that point in the descent, and the unobscured moon let her see them so plainly that she went weak and dizzy. But they passed it safely and, after a long rest, continued down till a shower of jagged stone and cries in curt dispute betrayed that they were upon the traverse over the rotten rock. She saw them try twice to advance to the right, but both times they retreated; she saw them attempt a traverse to the left; then the Swiss, who was leading, gave up. He returned to the other two, who shortened the rope to the blanketed form till they drew it to them. Then through the glasses she witnessed, as if a few yards above her—though the true distance was a long two

hundred feet—the very image of madness itself. For one man was binding upon himself the burden of three. Walter was winding the blanket rope about him and securing it over his shoulders; he freed it from the others and bore upon his back the great cocoon of the helpless man. Then, alone and on a route of his own down the rotten rock, he began to descend.

He came down his length and boldly kicked for a toe-hold in the rotten rock; found it, or made it; found hand-holds, too, and let himself down again, another length; a third; a fourth, and still he maintained himself and his pack. Rotten rock ceased to shower below him; he was upon a securer rise, and had traversed far enough to the right so that, when Milrane and Gampel followed him, the *débris* they sent down did not threaten him. But they must continue above him freed from him and of no help.

Margaret seized the cold rock before her and climbed; she knew that she could do little to aid him; but at a bad place many yards above the glacier her hands reached up and touched his boots and began to

Margaret's hands reached up and touched his boots and began to guide them in their gropings.

guide them in their gropings for projection or crevice to sustain him.

"Will o' the Wisp!" his whistling expiration of breath seemed to say to her. So they came down to the glacier together.

THE man brought down lived; and several hours later, when the four were bearing him into the valley, they met a party of guides and a surgeon sent by the railway officials. Upon learning that the two men left on the mountain were dead, the surgeon turned back with the injured man; and as the guides decided to await the arrival of adequate tackle before attempting to move the bodies, they also faced about and relieved the bearers of the blanket. So, after a while, Walter and Margaret went apart from the others.

The early dawn of the north was glowing upon the mountain tops and warm light was glancing into the valley when Walter dropped upon the trunk of a fallen pine and Margaret pressed beside him, her arms about his as he enfolded her.

'Dearest, my love; I shall never forgive myself," she said.

"Why, Will-o'-the-Wisp?"

"I might have killed you."

"It came out all right."

"But how I—mistook you."

"Not me. I was looking back to what I'd been, Will-o'-the-Wisp. I was letting that satisfy me! I, at twenty-seven years and just after winning you! Do you want to know what I thought when I saw those men fall and wouldn't tell you?"

"No. I don't care."

"You must! You're to be my wife. I thought, Margaret, 'They're dead, probably. At any rate, it's none of my affair now. I've saved the lives of enough men. I've risked my skin sufficiently. I've done my full bit; everyone knows it. I'm going to take my reward now.'"

"You had a right to think whatever you did, Walter."

"You're shaken now, little Will-o'-the-Wisp. You didn't feel that then. You knew something was the matter with me. I was thinking of myself as through—through. 'Let someone else take the chance now; I'll reap, and rest upon the record made.' That was the matter with me. But that'll not come again—now that I have you. Do you want to go on now?"

"I want to stay here with you for ever."

"Not you—on the record made! Oh, I know what a fortunate thing it was that you were with me on that train. Suppose a thing like that had come to me and you had not been there to drive me out; suppose I'd gone on and all my life been through—through with man's big work because I'd a record and could rest instead of——"

"What, Walter?"

"Beginning all over again with you!"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 135.

(The Third of the Series.)

His, Eastern Englishman, who English made
The Eastern mystic of the Apostle's trade.

1. Who punts hereat should shun the shady bank.
2. Caliph, and Doctor of the highest rank.
3. Hung the mute harp upon its storied walls.
4. A little city, saved when Cities sank,

5. This owns him Shakespeare's most notorious gull.
6. So sighs the feaster, when he owns him full.
7. This calls the painter, what he paints again.
8. Feeling insensitive, benumbed, and dull.

9. To paint it, wasteful as to gild fine gold.
10. Acts that bred war-time orders manifold.
11. Concerning all Man might or might not do.
This is the total when the whole is told.

EDI.

Answers to Acrostic No. 135 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on October 11th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 134.

1. B	cetroo	T
2. R	eveng	E
3. O	bero	N
4. W	ashingto	N
5. N	ecessit	Y
6. I	sthmu	S
7. N	em	O
8. G	orgo	N

NOTES.—Light 1. Beetroot to me. 2. Tennyson, The Revenge. 3. Shakespeare, A Midsummer-Night's Dream. 7. Dickens, Bleak House.

TWENTY-SIXTH SERIES: RESULT.

Thirteen solvers answered all the acrostics quite correctly, and will share the prizes, each one receiving £1. They will be ineligible for prizes in the twenty-seventh series, now running.

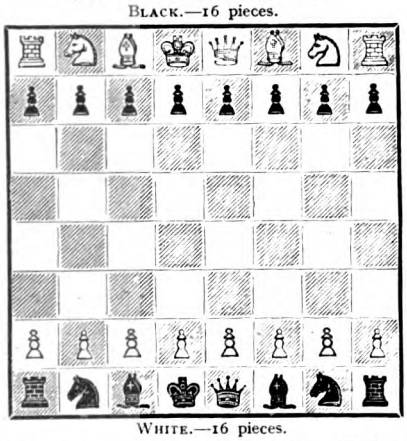
The winners are: Aber, Mr. W. W. Grundy, University College, Cardiff; Deen, Mr. J. Mulhall, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland; Manora, Mr. G. W. Sealy, 19, Redcliffe Gardens, S.W.10; Perky, Mr. A. T. Hill, Incents, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted, Herts; Rumball, Sir Alfred Croft, K.C.I.E., Rumleigh, Bere Alston, Devon; Silex, Mr. J. L. Wolferstan, 5, Princess Square, Plymouth; Sivart, Mr. C. Clay, 11, Tite Street, Chelsea, S.W.3; Splosh, Mr. L. Dale, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, Sussex; Ubique, Major Luard, 14, Woodlane, Falmouth; Vinjo, Mrs. C. B. Keston, 33A, Hogarth Road, S.W.5; Yoko, Mr. F. Rawson, 19D, Pembridge Square, W.2; Zenas, Mr. F. S. Pilleau, 8, Meadow Way Green, Letchworth; Zyme, Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 107A, Brixton Hill, S.W.2.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

721.—CHANGING PLACES.

BLACK.—16 pieces.



WHITE.—16 pieces.

HERE is a new chess puzzle that will fascinate when once you get to work on it. Set up the board as for a game. Then try to make the eight white pieces change places with the eight black (the queens remaining on their own colours, as shown in the diagram) in the fewest possible moves. You must, of course, move the pawns, but I have not shown them moved because their final position would give away the key to the solution. The colours move alternately and in strict accordance with the rules of the game, only no captures are allowed. The search for absolute economy in the moves will be found most interesting.

722.—PICKLEMINSTER TO QUICKVILLE.

TWO trains, A and B, leave Pickleminster for Quickville at the same time as two trains, C and D, leave Quickville for Pickleminster. A passes C 120 miles from Pickleminster and D 140 miles from Pickleminster. B passes C 126 miles from Quickville and D half way between Pickleminster and Quickville. Now, what is the distance from Pickleminster to Quickville? Every train runs uniformly at an ordinary rate.

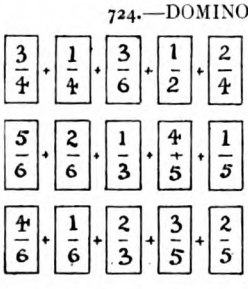
723.—THE DISHONEST DAIRYMAN.

CAN you make sense of the following by inserting the letter I, repeated as often as you like :—

F T H N M L K B R N G S L L C T T N

T H N K L L S K M T M X T T L L T S T H N.

724.—DOMINO FRACTIONS.



HERE is a new puzzle with dominoes. Taking an ordinary box, discard all doubles and blanks. Then, substituting figures for the pips, regard the remaining fifteen dominoes as fractions. It will be seen in the illustration that I have so arranged them that the fractions in every row of five dominoes sum to exactly 2½. But I have only used proper fractions. You are allowed to use as many improper fractions (such as ⅘, ⅔, ⁴⁄₃) as you like, but must make the five dominoes in every rank sum to 10. It is a teasing little puzzle, but not difficult if you set to work in the right way.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

715.—TURNING THE DIE.

THE best call for the first player is either "two" or "three," as in either case only one particular throw should defeat him. If he called "one," the throw of either 3 or 6 should defeat him. If he called "two," the throw of 5 only should defeat him. If he called "three," the throw of 4 only should defeat him. If he called "four," the throw of either 3 or 4 should defeat him. If he called "five," a throw of either 2 or 3 should defeat him. And if he called "six," the throw of either 1 or 5 should defeat him. It is impossible to give here a complete analysis of the play, but I will just state that if at any time you score either 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, or 23, with the die any side up, you ought to lose. If you score 7 or 16 with any side up you should win. The chance of winning with the other scores depends on the lie of the die.

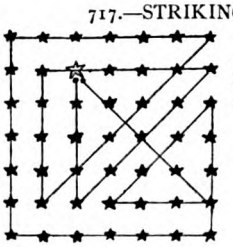
716.—DIGITS AND PRIMES.

THE 4, 6, and 8 must come in the tens place, as no prime number can end with one of these, and 2 and 5 can only appear in the units place if alone. When those facts are noted the rest is easy, as here shown :—

47
61
89
2
3
5

207

717.—STRIKING OUT STARS



THE illustration explains itself. The feat is performed in as few as twelve continuous straight strokes.

718.—A CHARADE.

THE word is THY-ME.

719.—THE ADINCO PUZZLE.

AD-HERE (HERE after) it will stick. IN-HERE will stick the more. And CO-HERE will stick all the faster.

720.—PAYING THE TOLL.

IT has been suggested to me that the man may have had a halfpenny in his pocket and found or borrowed another. But I think it is quite sufficient to say that he had two halfpennies in his pocket. Two halfpennies are not a penny (coin), nor had he "anything of the value of a penny," for two halfpennies are not "a thing." As a "thing," each halfpenny was of less value than a penny.

NOV 5 1924

TUMN FICTION NUMBER

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

Stories By

ARNOLD BENNETT

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN W. B. MAXWELL

AUSTIN PHILIPS EDGAR JEPSON

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Calvert's

CARBOLIC

Tooth Powder

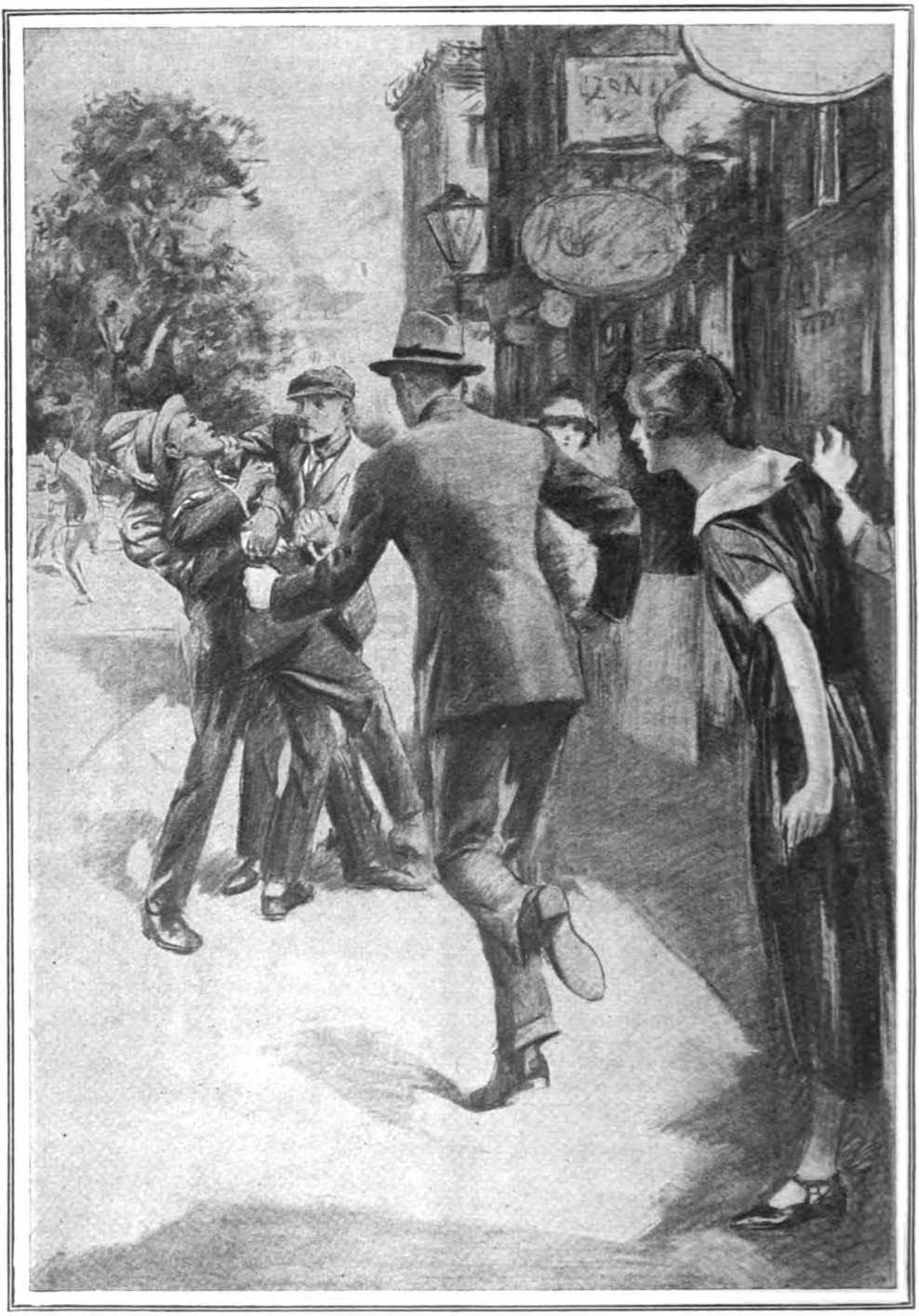
pleases the child and satisfies the parent.

From a parent's point of view, the efficient cleansing services, together with the antiseptic properties which this dentifrice provides, will be appreciated as readily as the pleasing flavour commends it to the child.

6d., 1/-, 1/6 *and* **5/-** *a tin from your Chemist.*

F. C. CALVERT & CO., MANCHESTER.

THE
STRAND
MAGAZINE
November, 1924.



"BY JOVE! THEY'RE GETTING IT OFF HIM!" CRIED LORD SCREDINGTON, AND DASHED OUT OF THE SHOP. MISS TIMMINS FOLLOWED HIM. TWENTY YARDS DOWN THE STREET A GROUP OF LOAFERS WERE HAMMERING YU CHI TING.

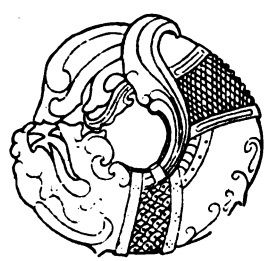
(See page 436.)

The Jade Spirit-Gong

by

EDGAR JEPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS



IT needed the eyes of little Miss Timmins, eyes trained almost from babyhood to peruse curious and beautiful things, to see the disk. Not more than three inches of it was in sight; the rest of it was hidden by a pile of gramophone records which had been set on it. That three inches was of a sombre colour. The dirt of years, black dirt, brown dirt, grey dirt, yellow dirt, had formed a blackish-brownish-yellowish-greyish film on it; and it was a thick film. Only eyes as keen as little Miss Timmins's could have seen the faint pattern under that film. The disk, whatever it might be, whatever it might be made of, was carved.

Miss Timmins entered the shop with all a hunter's excitement at the sight of a strange beast. She *was* hunting, hunting through the junk shops; it was part of her business. At the sound of her entrance a large, round, odoriferous, slatternly woman, with a red nose and a watery eye, came from the room behind the shop. At the sight of Miss Timmins's pretty face she seemed to bristle slightly, like a cat suddenly confronted by a strange cat.

"What's that round thing under the pile of gramophone records?" said Miss Timmins, pointing to the protruding edge of the disk.

Displaying her contempt for female attractiveness by an aloof and *dégagé* air, the woman shoved the gramophone records aside and raised the disk with a hand covered with as sombre a film. Miss Timmins saw that part of the disk was pierced—carved *à jour* is the technical phrase—and the carving looked to her to be Oriental.

The woman moistened a dirty thumb with a grey tongue, rubbed away a little of the film of dirt on the disk, and disclosed a dirty-grey patterned surface.

Then, in instructive, patronizing, but faintly hostile accents, she said: "That's hallybaster, that is."

"Oh?" said Miss Timmins in the tone of one receiving information respectfully.

"There's a lot of collectors of hallybaster nowadays, and it's gittin' dearer and dearer every day—most hexpensive it's gittin'," said the woman.

Miss Timmins took the disk from her and examined it. Neither her eyes nor her fingers could tell her of what it was composed. Only the texture of caked dirt presented itself to them. But the pierced part of it looked like a dragon's head; and it was heavy—stone or glass.

"I'm afraid it would be too expensive for me, if it's alabaster," said Miss Timmins.

The woman's eyes brightened at the prospect of a sale; and she drew the back of her dirty hand across her lips with a gesture that conveyed the odd suggestion that her thought had flown to a half-quartern of gin. She took the disk from Miss Timmins and examined it with the air of an expert.

"Hallybaster it is," she said. "An' I couldn't take less than seven bob for it."

Miss Timmins knew the kind of woman too well to accept the offer out of hand. To do so would have aroused the woman's

Copyright, 1924, by Edgar Jepson.

suspicions that the disk was a really valuable object of art and she would ask more, or refuse to sell it at all. Therefore she suggested that she should pay four shillings for it. The protracted negotiations which followed ended in her acquiring it for five-and-sixpence. The woman wrapped it up clumsily in a dirty piece of newspaper, and as she took the five-and-sixpence from Miss Timmins she passed the back of her hand across her lips in the same gin-suggesting gesture.

Miss Timmins came out of the shop in a pleased excitement; she might have done a very good morning's work. It was past twelve, and she walked briskly home.

The shop of Mr. Timmins in Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, was narrow and dark, a poor mart in which to traffic in beautiful things. But, unlike most little curio shops hidden away in back streets, it was neither dirty nor crowded. There were few things in it, but they were well displayed: objects of art for a collector of moderate means, half of them European, half Oriental.

Mr. Timmins was sitting at the desk at the back of the shop, reading. His dim blue eyes looked upon the world through old-fashioned horn spectacles; his lank grey hair hung half-way down his Gladstonian collar; his black tie was narrow; his frock-coat was dingy; his slippers were of felt.

He was reading the literature of his subject, the literature which embellishes the theory that the honest Anglo-Saxons are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.

"Lord Scredington came in to see if you had found any more hard-stone," he said, in his gentle voice. "He said he was disappointed not to find you in, and if you did come across a nice piece, would you take it round to his flat?"

Miss Timmins flushed. She told herself that it was just like the cheek of that cheerful and wicked young nobleman. He knew that nothing would induce her to take anything round to his flat. She had once taken a jade jui plaque to it, and had been horrified and frightened by the manners of its owner. Apparently he had taken the cave-man as his model. She flushed, and then she scowled. As she had not been at hand to tease, he had used her innocent father as his teasing mouthpiece. She added this last offence to the long score against him she kept in her mind. He was always trying to tease her.

She said nothing; she went into the kitchen and began to cook the dinner, eager as she was to discover what her disk was. They talked little at the meal; Mr. Timmins was pondering what he had read; Miss Timmins was pondering many things, but chiefly Lord Scredington and his cheek.

AFTER dinner, still curbing her eagerness, she washed up. Then she did get to work on the disk, with hot water, soap, and a nail-brush. Naturally she began on that part of the disk which was carved *à jour*. The dirt was loath to leave it; but at the end of five minutes' scrubbing she had cleaned three inches of it, to find, to her joy, that it was composed of milky jade. She knew now what she had got: one of those spirit-gongs which the Chinese priests strike in their temples to call up spirits, or rather, to be exact, devils. She had been lucky indeed! She brushed away; twice she had to change the blackened water; the dirt of years put up a gallant fight. At last the disk was clean.

It was three-sixteenths of an inch thick and about seven inches broad. On one side were a few little red flecks, where, during the lapse of centuries, the iron in the stone had oxidized. The other side was fleckless. It was a lovely piece, a dragon with a fish's tail, the King of the Dragons. In Japan he has the body of a carp; in China, according to the experts, the body of a sturgeon. The body was curved, so that the head and tail met.

The carving, in low relief, was the quiet carving of a good period. Miss Timmins liked it exceedingly: as she phrased it to herself, there were no squiggles about it. For an inch below the head the body was adorned with a kind of collar of conventionalized scales; below the spines in the back it was adorned for two inches with a charming pattern of starry blossoms. The lines of the openwork head and tail were admirable. The hole in the centre was of the right size—half the breadth of the body encircling it. From the quietness of the carving and the red flecks in the stone she judged it to be fairly old—sixteenth-century, or perhaps even late fifteenth.

Triumphantly she showed it to her father. Mr. Timmins studied it with a faint air of disapproval, and said, doubtfully: "I've no doubt it's a good piece. But somehow it doesn't appeal to me. I never can 'see' these Oriental things."

"It *is* a good piece," said Miss Timmins, stroking it fondly.

She went upstairs and put on her prettiest frock and hat. Then she put the disk in the green russia leather attaché-case in which she carried objects of art to wealthy customers, walked briskly to the Museum, asked to see Mr. Webster, the expert in jade.

Mr. Webster was busy; but he knew Miss Timmins and told his clerk to admit her. Quite unconsciously, experts in objects

of art are kinder to pretty girls than they are to those so often richly-bearded collectors and dealers who consult them. Quite unconsciously he smiled upon Miss Timmins as he had never smiled on a bearded collector. She took the spirit-gong from the attaché-case, unwrapped it, and handed it to him, saying that she had come to ask if he could tell her the date of it. He took it from her and examined it with shining eyes.

Then he said, in reverent accents: "That's the finest spirit-gong I ever saw. The carving is delightful—of a really good period—early sixteenth-century at the latest."

"That was what I thought," said Miss Timmins, pleased to have been right.

He pointed out to her, with enthusiasm, those various beauties she had already seen for herself. She thanked him.

Then, not guilelessly, she said: "I thought I would bring it round to you first, in case the Museum would like to buy it."

Mr. Webster's face clouded; and he said, grumpily: "Of course the Museum would like to buy it! But it hasn't got the money. If I were to ask for a hundred pounds to buy a jade spirit-gong, they'd think I was mad."

"It is a pity," said Miss Timmins, with difficulty keeping her surprise and exultation out of her voice.

She had not dreamt that the disk was worth anything like a hundred pounds.

"It's a shame!" said Mr. Webster, in a tone of warm indignation.

Miss Timmins was sympathetic. Then she thanked him warmly for the information he had given her and walked home on very light feet—a hundred pounds for the gong would indeed make things easier for them. She would be able to launch out a little, buy better pieces at sales, and make a greater profit. She had visions of a shop in a street which collectors actually used.

She turned to the consideration of how to get that hundred pounds—or more. If the gong was worth a hundred pounds to the Museum, it was worth more to a collector. Lord Scredington was the obvious person to sell it to. If it took his fancy, he would pay a hundred and twenty pounds for it without a murmur. It would take his fancy: she knew his taste. But the cheeky message he had sent by her father was still rankling in her mind; and her violent desire to score off that cheerful and wicked young nobleman was stronger than usual. Then a happy thought came to her. His uncle, Sir Charles Goulceby, was as ardent a collector as Lord Scredington. Why should she not pit them against one another? Sir Charles was much richer than his nephew, and, though a man of quite uncommon meanness, quite as obstinate when it came to acquiring a piece on which he had set his fancy. When she reached home she wrote two postcards. They ran:—

I shall have a very fine milky jade spirit-gong here at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning.

Yours faithfully,
Beulah Timmins.

She went out and posted them. They would reach their destination that evening within a few minutes of one another, since Lord Scredington and Sir Charles Goulceby lived in Mayfair. Bar accident, the two of them should arrive at the shop at eleven next morning, together.

There was a happy but wicked smile on her face as she turned to go home. She disliked Sir Charles Goulceby much more than she disliked Lord Scredington. He was mean: a hard bargainer who would never give a fair price if he could help it. Nowadays she always asked him double what she intended to take for a piece.

ON her return to the shop she polished the spirit-gong with a wash-leather for a long time. Then she set it in the window on a square of black velvet. It was not at all likely that a collector who would give a hundred and twenty pounds for a piece of jade would find his way into Devonshire Street. But Miss Timmins, like all thoughtful persons who traffic in objects of art, was an almost fervent believer in Luck, and she rarely missed a chance. No wealthy collector did find his way into Devonshire Street that afternoon; and when she shut up the shop for the night she carried the precious gong up to her bedroom and locked it in a drawer.

She brought it down with her next morning and again put it in the window, at about half-past eight. It did not bring a wealthy collector into the shop, but at five minutes to nine it brought in a young Chinaman. He was dressed in quiet, good English clothes, cut by a good tailor. He asked her, in very good English, and with a cultivated intonation, if he might look at the round piece of jade in the window. She took it from the window and handed it to him.

His face was expressionless; there had been no note of excitement in his voice. But as he took it from her, her keen eyes noticed that his fingers were trembling a little.

He examined the gong carefully; then he drew his pocket-book from his pocket. From it he took a folded square of rice-paper and spread it flat on the glass case on the counter. Miss Timmins saw on it a drawing of the gong. He laid the gong on

it. The drawing was of exactly the same size as the gong.

"It is it," he said, gravely. "What is the price?"

Miss Timmins hesitated; then she said, "A hundred and fifty guineas."

He looked at her, and she perceived that the veil of Oriental impassivity was no longer drawn across his eyes. They were keen, shining, rather piercing eyes.

"It is a great deal of money, but not too much," he said, gravely. "Certainly not too much. But I am a student at your university," he said, waving his hand towards the north. "And I have not so much money at the moment. Yet I *must* have this piece of jade."

He hesitated, looking at Miss Timmins. She liked him. For all the rather flat nose and slanted eyes, it was a good face; and the forehead was very good indeed.

"No; I haven't the money to-day. But I could get it"—he paused to make the calculation—"in thirteen days from to-day. My grandfather, who would cable it, lives five days from the nearest telegraph station. Six days for the cable to reach him—six days for his cable to reach the telegraph office—and to-day and another day. Yes; in thirteen days from to-day."

"I'm expecting two customers at eleven, and one of them is sure to buy it," said Miss Timmins, reluctantly.

"At eleven?" he said, sharply, and paused, pondering. Then he said: "If you will wait thirteen days, I will give you two hundred guineas for it. And I will bring fifty guineas of it, as a deposit, before eleven o'clock."

Two hundred guineas! Miss Timmins's heart fairly leapt in her. This was beyond the dreams of avarice!

The young Chinaman looked at her with anxious, rather imploring eyes. Miss Timmins liked him; she told herself that he was a nice boy. He could not have been more than five years older than she was. She wanted to oblige him. Besides, two hundred guineas! And to score off Lord Scredington and Sir Charles Goulceby too!

"Very well," she said. "If you bring me the fifty guineas by eleven o'clock I will keep the gong and wait till the fourteenth day for the rest of the money."

"Thank you," he said, in a tone of immense relief, and smiled at her—such a nice smile, Miss Timmins thought.

He put the drawing back in his pocket-book and hurried out of the shop. She put the gong, on its square of black velvet, into the glass case on the counter. She took the small objects of art out of the case and put them in a drawer. She wished the gong to have its full value.

At a quarter to eleven the young Chinaman re-entered the shop briskly. He gave Miss Timmins fifty guineas in notes and received her receipt for them.

"It is the most beautiful spirit-gong I ever saw. I don't wonder you want it so badly," she said, smiling at him.

"Ah! you know what it is, do you?" he said, smiling at her. Then he added, gravely: "But it is more than beautiful. My family consider it holy. One of our ancestors gave it to a temple three hundred years ago. Forty years ago it was stolen. It was very powerful—at least, the priests of the temple believed it very powerful. They did not catch the thief. Later they learnt that he had sold it to an Englishman in Canton. Ever since then, whenever one of my family has been in England, he has looked for the gong. None of them ever came to England without the drawing, in case there should be another gong like this one, but larger or smaller, and he should make a mistake. My family believe that the ancestor who gave the gong to the temple is angry with us because we do not recover it. They will be greatly pleased to restore it. But whether it will still help the priests with the spirits, I do not know." He shrugged his shoulders, paused, then added: "But it would be better not to talk about it. There are countrymen of mine in London who would want the gong very much indeed. And there are other people, Europeans. The gong is well known."

"They wouldn't get it off *me*," said Miss Timmins, quickly. "I've sold it to *you*."

"If they could not buy it off you, they would try to steal it. Those countrymen of mine are not—er—quite nice. And those Europeans are dangerous people."

He gave her his name, Yu Chi Ting, and the address of his rooms, higher up the street, and bade her good morning.

As he went out of the shop Miss Timmins smiled happily: she had not only sold the gong for an undreamed-of sum, she had also scored off Lord Scredington and Sir Charles Goulceby. Her smile grew rather vengeful as she waited for them.

THEY were not punctual. It was a quarter past eleven when Lord Scredington's car drew up to the kerb; and he came briskly into the shop, tall, slim, with a clear, tanned skin, a thin, high-arched nose, eyes very nearly as blue as Miss Timmins's own, and an air of astonishing distinction.

Miss Timmins tried not to like the looks of him. She failed.

Then, with his usual cheek, he began: "Good morning, Beulah darling. I've nearly killed a policeman. I had to. I saw Uncle Charles's car in Hart Street and guessed

Miss Timmins saw on the paper a drawing of the gong. He laid the gong on it. The drawing was of exactly the same size.

"It is it," he said, gravely. "What is the price?"

you'd written to him too about this gong. You nearly got me hanged—out of sheer malice, you little horror! For you know he wouldn't pay you a decent price for it."

"Sir Charles is a good customer," said Miss Timmins, coldly and untruthfully.

"I nearly killed him too," said Lord Scredington, with a slight increase of his cheerfulness. "But that wouldn't have mattered. It would have come under the Extermination of Vermin Act."

"It's very wrong to speak like that about your uncle," said Miss Timmins, severely.

"Is it my fault that he's my uncle?" he cried, indignantly. "I didn't choose him! You know I didn't. You know quite well that if he'd been the only uncle left in the world I wouldn't have chosen him. I'd rather have gone without an uncle altogether!"

On his words Sir Charles Goulceby entered the shop, a man of sixty-five, with the Scredington nose, but with a small, thin-lipped, mean mouth. His face was flushed and his eyes were sparkling.

"You were within an ace of breaking my neck, you young ruffian!" he cried, furiously. "I'll inform the police and have your licence cancelled, I will!"

"Don't talk such outrageous nonsense!" said Lord Scredington, impenitently. "Everyone knows that I'm one of the most careful drivers in London. Go away! I've come to look at a piece of jade and you're disturbing me."

On the instant the collector's passion got the better of Sir Charles's righteous wrath; and he said, loudly: "So have I. Where is it, Miss Timmins?"

Miss Timmins took the gong from the glass case and laid it on the top of it on the square of black velvet which gave it its full value.

They bent over it, examining it, studying it, handling it in turn.

Then Sir Charles said, in a tone by no means as indifferent as he tried to make it, "It's not a bad piece. I'll give you thirty pounds for it."

"You're right. It isn't a bad piece. In fact, it's the most interesting, though not the most elaborate, gong you ever set eyes on. I'll give you sixty pounds for it, Miss Timmins," said Lord Scredington.

"Seventy!" snapped Sir Charles; and then he groaned.

"Let's say a hundred," said Lord Scredington, suavely. "A hundred, Miss Timmins."

Miss Timmins's time had come. With extraordinary sweetness she said: "I'm afraid it isn't for sale any longer. I've just sold it."

"You've sold it!" they exclaimed with one voice, glaring at her.

"Yes," said Miss Timmins, even more sweetly. "I wrote to you eleven o'clock; and now it's nearly twenty past. I sold it before you came—for two hundred guineas."

"But how can it be sold? You've got it here," said Sir Charles, in distrustful accents. "No one would leave a piece like this when he'd bought it."

"The customer left a deposit on it," said Miss Timmins.

Lord Scredington studied the gong once more with a very mournful air; then he said, mournfully: "Well, that's that. I'd have given you more for it."

Sir Charles, who had appeared to be choking, broke out: "But it's monstrous! Monstrous! I've come all this way for nothing!"

"Not for nothing, uncle. You've seen me," said Lord Scredington, sweetly.

Sir Charles glared at him. Lord Scredington heaved a sigh that was almost a groan. Then he said, with tears in his voice: "Good morning, Miss Timmins. Heaven forgive you! I must go. I must be alone with my bleeding heart."

He went out of the shop, drooping.

"I'M sorry, Sir Charles," said Miss Timmins, in soothing accents. "But I couldn't miss a chance like that. I knew you wouldn't want to give two hundred guineas for the gong."

"A monstrous price! Ridiculous!" said Sir Charles.

Then his earlier grievance came keenly on him; and gazing through the window at his nephew, who had lost his droop and was sitting upright, smiling cheerfully, in the driver's seat of his car, he added, fiercely: "That young man's a ruffian—a perfect ruffian! He's a throwback! There's a strong strain of Viking blood in the Goulceby's. It's come out in him—all of it!"

This was news to Miss Timmins. But she had heard her father speak of the Vikings, also descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. She looked through the window with a new interest at Lord Scredington, now moving off in his car, and said, thoughtfully:—

"Then I suppose they were like cavemen?"

"Like gorillas!" snapped Sir Charles; and he stalked out of the shop.

Miss Timmins's so kissable lips were wreathed by a pensive, pleased, and mischievous grin.

Then she took the gong upstairs, locked it in the bottom drawer of her chest of drawers, and thought no more about it.

Unfortunately, Sir Charles did think about it; and he thought about it in the wrong place. He was dining at the French Embassy that night; the memory of his

loss came upon him ; and in bitter accents he told the party he had just missed the finest jade spirit-gong he had ever seen. Mournfully he described the gong. He was accorded full sympathy.

After dinner a polished and agreeable young man with slate-coloured, almond-shaped eyes, set too close together on either side of a thin, high, hooked nose, in a clear-skinned, pale face on which the thick line of eyebrows that met above that thin nose stood out very black, devoted himself to Sir Charles with an air of sympathetic and respectful interest. He talked about Chinese art in general and then discussed the jade gong, heard from Sir Charles the exact circumstances of his failure to get it, that the purchaser had paid a deposit on it, and then drew from him a fuller description of it. The young man talked lightly enough ; and a most agreeable smile, which never rose as high as his eyes, kept wreathing his lips.

But when Sir Charles said that below the dragon's tail was a pattern of starry blossoms, the young man said, sharply : " Yes, yes—starry blossoms ! That is the one ! "

" I'm afraid it isn't for sale any longer. I've just sold it."
" You've sold it ! " they exclaimed with one voice, glaring at her.

" You know the piece ? " said Sir Charles.

The young man hesitated ; then he said : " Yes. I think so. It is in the tradition—the occult tradition."

" Oh, the occult ! " said Sir Charles contemptuously, with his sneering laugh.

For a breath the smiling mask which hid the young man broke in a frown which turned him suddenly sinister ; and running his finger in an odd gesture along the thick

black line of his eyebrows, he said in a suddenly harsh, grating voice: "But things can be done! Immense things!"

Sir Charles stared at him. It was for all the world as if a flash of lightning had revealed an abyss. Then the young man was smiling again with an almost oppressive agreeableness, and asking where Mr. Timmins's shop was.

Sir Charles told him, and later asked his hostess who the agreeable young man was.

"Oh, that's Baron Gageschi," she said. "He's a Moldo-Wallachian, attached to the Embassy. His friends call him the 'Vampire.' The way his eyebrows meet, you know."

Sir Charles did not know.

AT ten o'clock the next morning the agreeable young Moldo-Wallachian entered the shop to find Beulah polishing an ivory netsuke. He smiled upon her a most agreeable smile, and ungratefully she took a dislike to him at once.

"I am told that you have a spirit-gong in milky jade, a dragon with a fish's tail," he said, and again he smiled that agreeable smile. "Might I see it?"

The second agreeable smile was too much for Beulah; and she answered in almost ungracious accents: "It's sold."

"Yes. I know that it is sold, but I gathered that you still had it. And I should like to see it very much indeed."

She shook her head and said: "No, I'm afraid I can't show it to you. It's sold."

"But I want to see it very much. It will be worth your while," he said, and smiled a third agreeable smile.

It was too much. And with a tartness foreign to her nature, except when it was in contact with Lord Scredington, Beulah said: "Really, you know, I can't be bothered about the thing—I've sold it."

He did not smile a fourth time; his lips were set in a thin line; in his unsmiling face his eyes were hard. But his voice was soft and cajoling as he said: "But I will give you more for it—much more."

"I got a very good price for it, thank you," said Beulah, coldly.

"Whatever the price was, I will give you two hundred pounds more," he said.

Beulah was taken aback and saddened—four hundred and ten pounds when she was only getting two hundred guineas! But there was nothing to be done; a sale was a sale.

"Why do you want it so badly? You're not a Chinaman," she said, sharply.

"Oh! A Chinaman?" he said, slowly, in a tone of enlightenment. Then he added: "So a Chinaman has bought it!"

Beulah was yet more annoyed, and with herself; the gong was now the young Chinaman's business; she ought not to have talked about it.

"Well, I'm afraid I can't help you; the gong is sold," she said, in as indifferent a tone as she could command.

The young man beat a nervous tattoo with his long finger-nails on the glass of the case; then he said: "I'll give you five hundred pounds—cash."

"I can't take it. A sale is a sale," said Beulah, firmly, but with a note of regret in her voice.

He scowled at her; and she had very much the same impression as Sir Charles had had, the impression of looking into depths. Then he smiled a fifth agreeable smile and laid a visiting-card on the counter.

"You will change your mind—very likely," he said. "When you do, telegraph or write to me to this address."

"I sha'n't change my mind!" said Beulah, angrily.

"Then you'll be a little fool," he said, quietly, and walked out of the shop.

He left Beulah very angry, not only with him but also with herself—for having talked. She was even a little frightened; he had looked so dangerous. She picked up the visiting-card and on it she read:—

BARON GAGESCHI.

THE MOLDAVIAN EMBASSY,
HANOVER SQUARE,
W.1.

She was troubled about the matter for the next thirty-six hours. Then it passed out of her mind.

THREE mornings later she was badly startled to find that the shop had been burgled. The drawers in the counter and a locked cabinet had been forced open and ransacked. Then, to her surprise, she found that nothing had been taken. She was not surprised long; plainly the burglar had been hunting for the gong.

A locksmith replaced the broken locks. She did not tell her father about the ransacking of the shop; why worry him? But she went about her work of dusting and polishing the works of art with a troubled face.

In the middle of the morning Lord Scredington came into the shop to learn whether she had found anything for him.

He did not ruffle her dignity by calling her " Baby " or " Beulah darling."

He was in a polite and friendly mood. She seemed to him to be rather absent-minded; and he asked her what was the matter.

An impulse urged her to tell him her trouble. He might, as his uncle had so bitterly asserted, be a throw-back to the Vikings; but he did look a useful helper in an awkward situation.

She told him what was the matter, the story of the young Chinaman who left the deposit on the gong, and of Baron Gageschi's offer of five hundred pounds for it, and the way he had pressed that offer. Lord Scredington seemed most affected by the fact that the young Moldo-Wallachian had been rude to her. He said that he was going to punch his head. This purpose of his remained unaffected by Beulah's assurances that he would again get into the papers.

Then she said: " But the thing is, when I came down this morning I found that the shop had been burgled, but nothing had been taken. So the burglar must have been after the gong."

" The deuce he was ! " said Lord Scredington, frowning. " I don't like the look of this. I know Gageschi a little; and he's a queer beggar. He's very thick with that set that goes in for the occult so strongly; and they call him the 'Vampire.' And there are queer stories going round about them—devil worship and that kind of thing. I shouldn't wonder if that's what he wants the gong for."

" That *is* what he wants it for," said Beulah, quickly. " The young Chinaman who bought the gong said that his people believed it to be very powerful; and Baron Gageschi evidently knew about it. And they do call up devils with these gongs, or try to."

" I don't like it," said Lord Scredington, shaking his head. " I don't like it. Those Balkanese don't stick at much; and that occult set are mostly mad. I've seen Gageschi himself look as mad as a hatter about nothing at all; and, of course, a mad Moldo-Wallachian must be the most dangerous beast there is."

" I can't think how Baron Gageschi knows that the gong is still here," said Beulah.

" Perhaps somebody told him that your customer had only paid a deposit on it."

" Someone must have," said Beulah, with a worried air. " And the Chinaman isn't bringing the rest of the money for—for ten days."

Lord Scredington also was frowning. Then his face brightened with a happy thought, and he added: " I must come and stay with you till the Chinaman brings the money and takes the infernal thing away."

" You won't ! " said Beulah, hastily. Then she added, more graciously: " I'm sorry—I didn't mean that—not quite. But there's nowhere for you to stay."

" I'll stay in the shop. I'll sleep on the counter. I insist on it," he said, with cheerful obstinacy.

Miss Timmins did not pursue this subject; she said in rather dolorous accents: " I'm afraid of their coming again; and there's only daddy and I in the house; and we shouldn't be able to stop them getting it."

" I've told you what to do," he said.

" But you'd be worse than a burglary," said Miss Timmins from the heart.

" Thank you," he said, with so many tears in his voice and such an air of dejection that, though she doubted very much their sincerity, she was forced to be apologetic and soothing.

He refused to be comforted, and presently went away, drooping miserably till he was outside the shop.

LATE in the afternoon he came back, carrying a small box, and said: " I've brought you what is called a gat. Do you know how to use it ? "

Opening the box he disclosed a small automatic pistol.

Miss Timmins looked at it with the greatest disfavour and said: " No, I don't ! And I don't want to ! "

" But you must. It's the only thing to do if you won't let me stay here. Put on your hat and coat, and we'll get along to a shooting gallery at once."

Miss Timmins refused firmly. But besides being a throw-back to the Vikings, Lord Scredington had in him the makings of a deadly salesman. The cause was a good one; he found so many reasons why Miss Timmins should learn to use a gat, and pressed them on her with such vehemence, that he swept her off her feet; and she did put on her coat and hat—her best.

She did not realize that being taught to use a gat by a throw-back to the Vikings meant being taken possession of for the rest of the day, though she had realized that if ever she gave Lord Scredington an inch he would take a quarter of a mile, or try to. They spent an hour at the shooting gallery. As she handled the gat, her distaste for it wore off and she grew immensely interested in hitting the middle of the target. At the end of the hour she was hitting it with pleasing regularity. Later, to her surprise, she found herself dining at Thibault's, and then in a box at " Lilac Time." She was indeed glad she had

chanced to be wearing her prettiest frock. With the greatest reluctance she found herself enjoying herself immensely—not once did he ruffle her sensibilities. She had not dreamt—well, she had not dreamt. Next she found herself supping at the Italian Roof Garden and dancing with him. It was past two when he brought her back home. He made no attempt to ruffle her sensibilities when he said good night; not that—well, not that. Miss Timmins was a trifle bemused.

TWO mornings later Lord Scredington came out of the Golden Cave at a few minutes past three. He came out of it in a cheerful, even philanthropic, mood. Nothing would content that philanthropic mood but that he should go round to the shop in Devonshire Street to make sure that no one was burgling it.

As his car came quietly into the street his keen eyes caught sight of what looked like a shadow pressed against the door of the shop; and the car had not gone ten yards up the street when that shadow vanished.

He stopped the car and walked quietly to the door of the shop. He was not surprised that it opened to the pressure of his hand. He entered noiselessly and stood still, listening. A stair creaked. There came five seconds of silence. Then another stair creaked.

He struck a match, found the switch of the electric light, switched it on, and looked round for a weapon. Against the back wall he saw a broom. As he took it up another stair creaked.

He tip-toed noiselessly through the door at the back of the shop, slipped the handle of the broom through the banisters, and held it firmly about a foot above the sixth stair.

Then he snapped: "Come out of it!"

There came a grunt of surprise from high up the staircase; then the burglar came out of it with a rush. He dashed lightly down the stairs till the bottom of his right shin found the broom-handle. Then he dived clean into the door into the shop, drove it open, and came a thundering cropper in the middle of the floor. The fact that Lord Scredington was sitting on him did not help him to get his breath back any quicker.

A door opened at the top of the stairs, and Miss Timmins cried: "All right, dad! Don't bother to get up! It's only something fallen down. I'll see to it."

Light feet came pattering down the stairs; and Miss Timmins came into the shop, wearing a blue dressing-gown; her little bare feet were very white under its hem. Her hair was plaited in a thick, long pigtail. She looked scared; but she wore a determined air, and the gat was in her hand.

Lord Scredington took in the picture completely; then he said: "I've got your burglar. What would you like me to do with him?"

Miss Timmins stood frowning. Police proceedings would be unpleasant and waste her time.

"It seems a pity," she said. "But I think you'd better let him go."

Lord Scredington hesitated; then he said: "Well, I might give him a sporting chance."

He shifted his position, set a knee on his prisoner's back, emptied his pockets of several nasty-looking tools, and told him to get up. The burglar got up, an active young man with bright black eyes. Lord Scredington marched him across the shop and thrust him into the street.

"I'll give you thirty yards start and then I'll shout for the police," he said.

From the way the active young man bucketed down the street and round the corner Lord Scredington gathered that he had quite recovered his breath.

He stepped back into the shop and said cheerfully: "Well, that's that!"

"I'm so much obliged to you," said Miss Timmins, in most grateful accents. "That brute might have cut my throat and dad's too! But how ever did you come to be here?"

"Oh, I just came round to see if there was anything doing."

"But it *was* good of you," she said; and her grateful eyes shone on him.

They were brighter than ever with sleep and excitement; her flushed face was charming. With her hair plaited in that pigtail, she looked very young indeed—about fourteen. Instinctively—his instinct was like that—Lord Scredington picked her up and kissed her and set her down again.

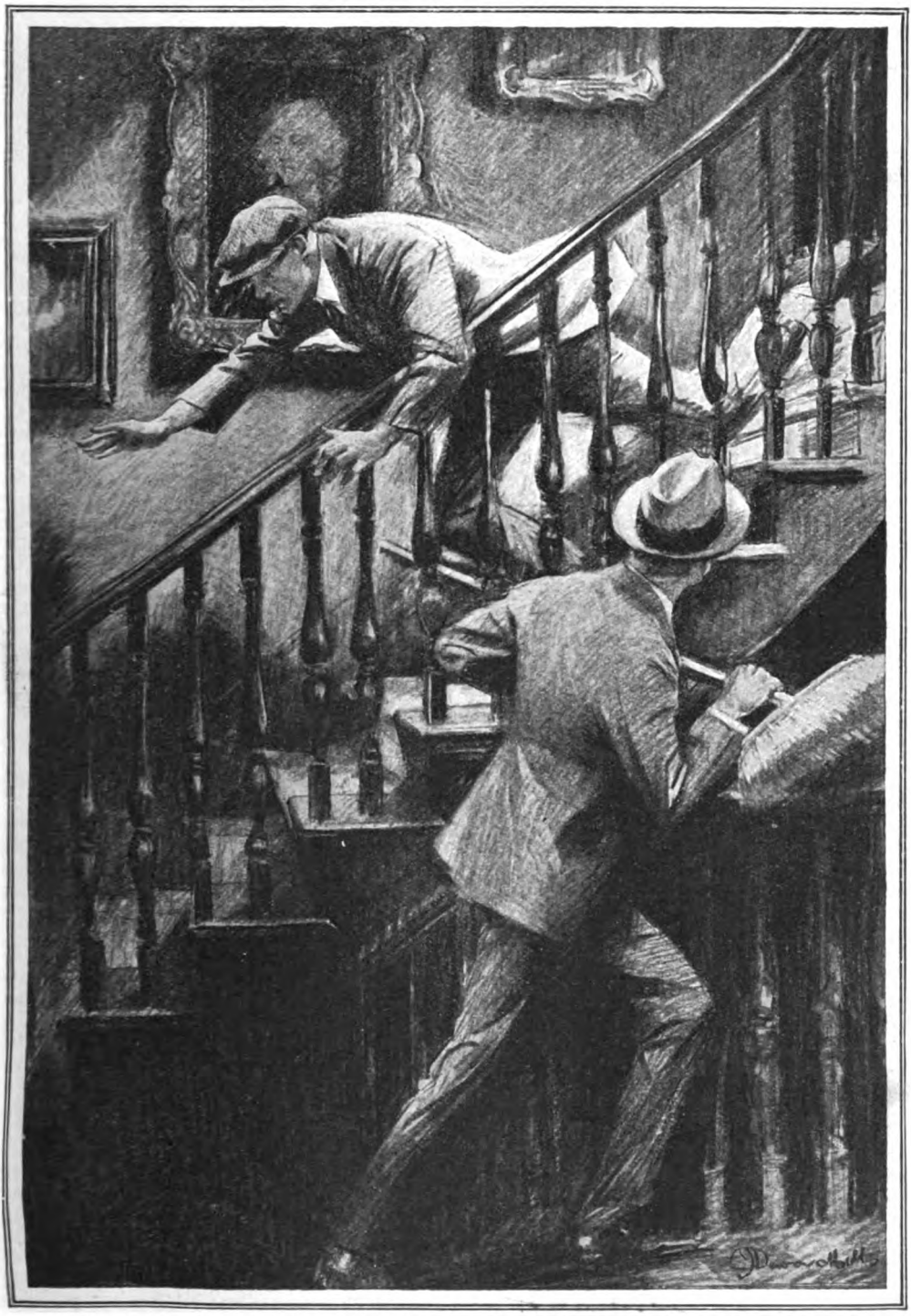
"Oh, dear! Why will you always do things like that?" cried Miss Timmins, almost in tears. "Just as I was beginning to like you, too!"

Lord Scredington looked down at her with very serious eyes and said, reproachfully: "If you could see yourself in a glass, you wouldn't ask such a silly question. But I tell you what: you just run upstairs and fetch that gong. I'm going to take care of it for you till that Chinaman comes for it."

Miss Timmins hesitated, frowning at him. Then she went upstairs and brought down the gong.

He shook hands with her and said good night with the most serious politeness.

She bolted the door; then made some haste up the stairs to look at herself in a glass.



The burglar dashed lightly down the stairs till the bottom of his right shin found the broom-handle.

THE next morning Yu Chi Ting came into the shop to tell Beulah that he had been cabled that his message was on its way to his grandfather. As he was telling her another customer came into the shop, a ferrety-faced young fellow, who looked like a lawyer's clerk. Beulah thought it better not to tell Yu Chi Ting about the two attempts to steal the gong. She told him that it was safe in the bank and said that she would have it ready for him at the shop "at eleven o'clock to-morrow week." It did not occur to her that that ferrety-faced customer was taking any interest in their conversation; he was earnestly studying the china in a cabinet at the back of the shop. When Yu Chi Ting had thanked her and gone, he asked her if she had any Crown Derby cups and saucers; she told him that she had none, and he went. It was only later that she realized he had come into the shop on purpose to hear that conversation.

On the appointed morning Lord Scredington's car stood at the door of Mr. Timmins's shop and Lord Scredington stood beside the counter, talking to Miss Timmins. They were taking their last look at the gong, mournfully pointing out to one another its beauties, and deploring that it was being reft from them for ever.

Then Yu Chi Ting entered. His air was not impassive, but eager and excited. His eyes grew still brighter at the sight of the gong. He greeted Miss Timmins politely and handed a small roll of notes to her. She counted them, with fingers that fumbled a little at handling so large a sum, locked them in a drawer, wrapped up the gong carefully, and gave it to him.

He thanked her warmly for keeping it for him, bade her good day, and went out of the shop.

"And that's that," said Lord Scredington, gloomily.

"You'll think it awfully silly of me, but sometimes it really hurts me to have to part with a beautiful thing like that," said Miss Timmins, almost sorrowfully confidential.

"I don't," said Lord Scredington.

On his words there came a sudden outcry in the street.

"By Jove! They're getting it off him!" cried Lord Scredington, and dashed out of the shop.

Miss Timmins followed him. Twenty yards down the street a group of loafers were hammering Yu Chi Ting. Even as Lord Scredington started towards them, one of them broke from the group, rushed to the bottom of the street, and handed the parcel to a man in the tonneau of the large blue car waiting at the bottom of it.

"It's Baron Gageschi!" cried Miss Timmins.

Lord Scredington swung round and jumped into the driver's seat of his car. How and why Miss Timmins tumbled into the tonneau she never knew. It must have been the human instinct to be where things are doing. By the time she had picked herself up, the car was round the corner racing down Theobald's Road after the blue car.

Then the Baron looked back.

He must have perceived that the car that was following was the car that had stood in front of Mr. Timmins's shop. He leant forward and spoke to his chauffeur; and the chauffeur accelerated. So did Lord Scredington. The blue car turned sharply at Southampton Row, turned again at the corner of Russell Square, ran through the squares into Percy Street, turned north again, then west. Sometimes losing ground, sometimes gaining it, Lord Scredington stuck to the blue car. He was not thirty yards behind it when it stopped, almost with a jerk, at the Moldavian Embassy.

The "Vampire" jumped from the car and scuttled up the steps. He was half-way through the door when Lord Scredington reached him. They entered the hall together, Lord Scredington's arm affectionately round the "Vampire's" neck, lifting him from his feet in the impressive gesture known as scragging him. They entered with a violent celerity and knocked the footman down before he could get out of their way. In his astonishment he yelled; and the other two footmen in the hall dashed forward.

Lord Scredington had torn the gong from the Baron's grip; and he fairly threw him at them. The missile stopped one of them, but the other gripped Lord Scredington. Then Miss Timmins appeared at the open door and very sensibly screamed.

At this unusual sound in those inviolate precincts doors opened all round the hall and out came clerks and secretaries and attachés, and about fifteen voices asked in several tongues: "What's the matter?"

Then out of a door at the back of the hall came the Ambassador himself.

"What's this?" he cried, in a voice that dominated the tumult; and at the sound of it the hubbub died down.

"This gentleman was assaulting of Baron Gageschi," said the footman who had been knocked down.

"Assaulting one of my suite? In the Embassy itself! What does this mean, sir?" cried the Ambassador.

"Assaulting a damned thief!" snapped Lord Scredington, hotly. "This young ruffian set a gang of roughs to rob Mr. Yu Chi Ting, a customer of this young lady.

of a jade gong he had just bought from her. We followed him ; and I recovered it."

The Ambassador hesitated, frowning. Lord Scredington's appearance added weight to this serious accusation. It was impressive. Miss Timmins told herself that he looked like—like a flaming sword ; and then told herself that that was silly.

" Who are you ? " said the Ambassador.

" Lord Scredington."

The Ambassador hesitated again. Then he turned to Baron Gageschi and spoke to him in Moldo-Wallachian. A sharp interchange of questions and answers followed. The voice of the Ambassador grew sterner and sterner ; the Baron slowly came to look the most disagreeable young man in the world.

Then the Ambassador turned to Lord Scredington and said, " Please come this way."

Lord Scredington hesitated for a moment ; then he followed the Ambassador. Sticking close to Lord Scredington, Miss Timmins followed too. The Ambassador led them into the room out of which he had come, and shut the door.

He turned to them with a somewhat worried air and said in his excellent English, " You have acted rightly, sir. It is a disgraceful business. My subordinate has been using his official position for his personal ends." He hesitated again, frowning, then he added : " I should prefer to deal with him myself, if it could be arranged."

Lord Scredington hesitated ; he wanted the " Vampire " to go to prison.

Miss Timmins laid her hand on his arm and said, " The police are such a bother always."

It occurred to him that her mission in life, or one of them, seemed to be to induce him to compound felonies.

" Oh, well——" he said, hesitating.

" You have recovered the gong. Therefore it is not essential that the affair should go to the police, or the Press—if you could arrange it. I do not think that this Chinaman would want to press the matter," said the Ambassador ; and his tone was at once persuasive and urgent. " It would be such an ugly scandal."

Lord Scredington hesitated again. He had a personal dislike of scandals. Then he said, " Very well, your Excellency. I will try to arrange it. Though I should have liked——"

His expression again grew vengeful.

" Thank you. It's very good of you," said the Ambassador, hastily, as if he did not desire any of Lord Scredington's second thoughts. " I'm very much obliged to you indeed." And hastily he opened the door to give those second thoughts no time to come.

" I'll arrange it, sir," said Lord Scredington ; and half turning he slipped his hand through Miss Timmins's arm.

The Ambassador led them through the hall briskly. On the top of the front-door steps he said, " I'm very much obliged to you. And this young lady ? "

Lord Scredington explained that Miss Timmins's father kept the curiosity shop at which the Chinaman had purchased the gong. The Ambassador made a note of the address. Evidently the Embassy would purchase an object of art. Then he again thanked Lord Scredington warmly and shook hands with them.

" Good morning, sir," said Lord Scredington ; and he led Miss Timmins down the steps to the car.

HE found a motoring cap for her. It did not fit at all, but it was better than nothing.

They returned to Devonshire Street by another route. Lord Scredington did not want to meet any policemen who had seen the racing cars. On the way they discussed the affair in all its bearings with the liveliest interest.

Their business was now to find Yu Chi Ting. Miss Timmins put on a hat and coat, and they went together to his rooms higher up the street. They found him in his sitting-room, in an easy-chair, with a bruised forehead and a blackening eye, looking very shaky and wholly disconsolate. The sight of the precious parcel restored him almost on the instant.

Lord Scredington offered to drive him to the office from which he proposed to dispatch the gong. He accepted the offer gratefully, and packed it very carefully and tightly, with cotton-wool, in the box he had ready for it. He sealed the box, on which the address had already been painted. They walked down the street to the car, bade Miss Timmins good-bye, and drove off.

On the way Lord Scredington explained that he had arranged that the overworked police should not be troubled with the matter. As the Ambassador had suggested, Yu Chi Ting raised no objection to this. Indeed he seemed relieved.

The box was dispatched. Yu Chi Ting turned from the counter to Lord Scredington and said, " I'm very obliged and grateful."

" Not at all," said Lord Scredington ; then he sighed and added : " It's a pity it's going such a long way off."

Jane Gets Off the Fairway

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

THE side-door leading into the smoking-room opened, and the golf-club's popular and energetic secretary came trotting down the steps on to the terrace above the ninth green. As he reached the gravel, a wandering puff of wind blew the door to with a sharp report, and the Oldest Member, who had been dozing in a chair over his "Wodehouse on the Niblick," unclosed his eyes, blinking in the strong light. He perceived the secretary skimming to and fro like a questing dog.

"You have lost something?" he inquired, courteously.

"Yes, a book. I wish," said the secretary, annoyed, "that people would leave things alone. You haven't seen a novel called 'The Man With the Missing Eyeball' anywhere about, have you? I'll swear I left it on one of these seats when I went in to lunch."

"You are better without it," said the sage, with a touch of austerity. "I do not approve of these trashy works of fiction. How much more profitably would your time be spent in mastering the contents of such a volume as I hold in my hand! This is the real literature."

The secretary drew nearer, peering discontentedly about him; and as he approached the Oldest Member sniffed inquiringly.

"What," he said, "is that odour of——? Ah, I see that you are wearing them in your buttonhole. White violets," he murmured. "White violets. Dear me!"

The secretary smirked.

"A girl gave them to me," he said, coyly. "Nice, aren't they?" He squinted down complacently at the flowers, thus missing a sudden sinister gleam in the Oldest Member's eye—a gleam which, had he been on his guard, would have sent him scudding over the horizon; for it was the gleam which told that the sage had been reminded of a story.

"White violets," said the Oldest Member, in a meditative voice. "A curious coincidence that you should be wearing white violets and looking for a work of fiction. The combination brings irresistibly to my mind——"

Realizing his peril too late, the secretary started violently. A gentle hand urged him into the adjoining chair.

"——the story," proceeded the Oldest Member, "of William Bates, Jane Packard, and Rodney Spelvin."

The secretary drew a deep breath of relief, and the careworn look left his face.

"It's all right," he said, briskly. "You told me that one only the other day. I remember every word of it. Jane Packard got engaged to Rodney Spelvin, the poet, but her better feelings prevailed in time, and she broke it off and married Bates, who was a golfer. I recall the whole thing distinctly. This man Bates was an unromantic sort of chap, but he loved Jane Packard devotedly. Bless my soul, how it all comes back to me! No need to tell it me at all."

"What I am about to relate now," said the sage, tightening his grip on the other's

Copyright, 1924, by P. G. Wodehouse.

coat-sleeve, " is another story about William Bates, Jane Packard, and Rodney Spelvin."

INASMUCH (said the Oldest Member) as you have not forgotten the events leading up to the marriage of William Bates and Jane Packard, I will not repeat them. All I need say is that that curious spasm of romantic sentiment which had caused Jane to fall temporarily under the spell of a man who was not only a poet but actually a non-golfer appeared to have passed completely away, leaving no trace behind. From the day she broke off her engagement to Spelvin and plighted her troth to young Bates, nothing could have been more eminently sane and satisfactory than her behaviour. She seemed entirely her old self once more. Two hours after William had led her down the aisle, she and he were out on the links, playing off the final of the Mixed Foursomes, which—and we all thought it the best of omens for their married happiness—they won hands down. A deputation of all that was best and fairest in the village then escorted them to the station to see them off on their honeymoon, which was to be spent in a series of visits to well-known courses throughout the country.

Before the train left, I took young William aside for a moment. I had known both him and Jane since childhood, and the success of their union was very near my heart.

" William," I said, " a word with you."

" Make it snappy," said William.

" You have learned by this time," I said, " that there is a strong romantic streak in Jane. It may not appear on the surface, but it is there. And this romantic streak will cause her, like so many wives, to attach an exaggerated importance to what may seem to you trivial things. She will expect from her husband not only love and a constant tender solicitude——"

" Speed it up," urged William.

" What I am trying to say is that, after the habit of wives, she will expect you to remember each year the anniversary of your wedding day, and will be madder than a wet hen if you forget it."

" That's all right. I thought of that myself."

" It is not all right," I insisted. " Unless you take the most earnest precautions, you are absolutely certain to forget. A year from now you will come down to breakfast, and Jane will say to you, 'Do you know what day it is to-day?' and you will answer 'Tuesday' and reach for the ham and eggs, thus inflicting on her gentle heart a wound from which it will not readily recover."

" Nothing like it," said William, with extraordinary confidence. " I've got a system calculated to beat the game every time You know how fond Jane is of white violets?"

" Is she ? "

" She loves 'em. The bloke Spelvin used to give her a bunch every day. That's how I got the idea. Nothing like learning the shots from your opponent. I've arranged with a florist that a bunch of white violets is to be shipped to Jane every year on this day. I paid five years in advance. I am, therefore, speaking in the most conservative spirit, on velvet. Even if I forget the day, the violets will be there to remind me. I've looked at it from every angle, and I don't see how it can fail. Tell me frankly, is the scheme a wam or is it not ? "

" A most excellent plan," I said, relieved. And the next moment the train came in. I left the station with my mind at rest. It seemed to me that the only possible obstacle to the complete felicity of the young couple had been removed.

JANE and William returned in due season from their honeymoon, and settled down to the normal life of a healthy young couple. Each day they did their round in the morning and their two rounds in the afternoon, and after dinner they would sit hand in hand in the peaceful dusk, reminding one another of the best shots they had brought off at the various holes. Jane would describe to William how she got out of the bunker on the fifth, and William would describe to Jane the low raking wind-cheater he did on the seventh, and then for a moment they would fall into that blissful silence which only true lovers know, until William, illustrating his remarks with a walking-stick, would show Jane how he did that pin-splitter with the mashie on the sixteenth. An ideally happy union, one would have said.

But all the while a little cloud was gathering. As the anniversary of their wedding-day approached, a fear began to creep into Jane's heart that William was going to forget it. The perfect husband does not wait till the dawning of the actual day to introduce the anniversary *motif* into his conversation. As long as a week in advance he is apt to say, dreamily, " About this time a year ago I was getting the old silk hat polished up for the wedding," or " Just about now, a year ago, they sent home the sponge-bag trousers, as worn, and I tried them on in front of the looking-glass." But William said none of these things. Not even on the night before the all-important date did he make any allusion to it, and it was with a dull feeling of foreboding that Jane came down to breakfast next morning.

She was first at the table, and was pouring out the coffee when William entered. He

opened the morning paper and started to peruse its contents in silence. Not a yip did he let out of him to the effect that this was the maddest, merriest day of all the glad new year.

"William," said Jane.

"Hullo?"

"William," said Jane, and her voice trembled a little, "what day is it to-day?"

William looked at her over the paper, surprised.

"Wednesday, old girl," he replied. "Don't you remember that yesterday was Tuesday? Shocking memory you've got."

He then reached out for the sausages and bacon and resumed his reading.

"Jane," he said, suddenly. "Jane, old girl, there's something I want to tell you."

"Yes?" said Jane, her heart beginning to flutter.

"Something important."

"Yes?"

"It's about these sausages. They are the very best," said William, earnestly, "that I have ever bitten. Where did you get them?"

"From Brownlow."

"Stick to him," said William.

Jane rose from the table and wandered out into the garden. The sun shone gaily, but for her the day was bleak and cold. That William loved her she did not doubt. But that streak of romance in her demanded something more than mere placid love. And when she realized that the poor mutt with whom she had linked her lot had forgotten the anniversary of their wedding-day first crack out of the box, her woman's heart was so wounded that for two pins she could have beaned him with a brick.

It was while she was still brooding in this hostile fashion that she perceived the postman coming up the garden. She went to meet him, and was handed a couple of circulars and a mysterious parcel. She broke the string, and behold! a cardboard box containing white violets.

Jane was surprised. Who could be sending her white violets? No message accompanied them. There was no clue whatever to their origin. Even the name of the florist had been omitted.

"Now, who——?" mused Jane, and suddenly started as if she had received a blow. Rodney Spelvin! Yes, it must be he. How many a bunch of white violets had he given her in the brief course of their engagement! This was his poetic way of showing her that he had not forgotten. All was over between them, she had handed him his hat and given him the air, but he still remembered.

Jane was a good and dutiful wife. She loved her William, and no others need apply. Nevertheless, she was a woman. She looked about her cautiously. There was nobody in sight. She streaked up to her room and put the violets in water. And that night, before she went to bed, she gazed at them for several minutes with eyes that were a little moist. Poor Rodney! He could be nothing to her now, of course, but a dear lost friend; but he had been a good old scout in his day.

IT is not my purpose to weary you with repetitious detail in this narrative. I will, therefore, merely state that the next year and the next year and the year after that precisely the same thing took place in the Bateses' home. Punctually every September the seventh William placidly forgot, and punctually every September the seventh the sender of the violets remembered. It was about a month after the fifth anniversary, when William had got his handicap down to nine and little Braid Vardon Bates, their only child, had celebrated his fourth birthday, that Rodney Spelvin, who had hitherto confined himself to poetry, broke out in a new place and inflicted upon the citizenry a novel entitled "The Purple Fan."

I saw the announcement of the publication in the papers; but beyond a passing resolve that nothing would induce me to read the thing I thought no more of the matter. It is always thus with life's really significant happenings. Fate sneaks its deadliest wallops in on us with such seeming nonchalance. How could I guess what that book was to do to the married happiness of Jane and William Bates?

In deciding not to read "The Purple Fan" I had, I was to discover, overestimated my powers of resistance. Rodney Spelvin's novel turned out to be one of those things which it is impossible not to read. Within a week of its appearance it had begun to go through the country like Spanish influenza; and, much as I desired to avoid it, a perusal was forced on me by sheer weight of mass-thinking. Every paper that I picked up contained reviews of the book, references to it, letters from the clergy denouncing it; and when I read that three hundred and sixteen mothers had signed a petition to the authorities to have it suppressed, I was reluctantly compelled to spring the necessary cash and purchase a copy.

I had not expected to enjoy it, and I did not. Written in the neodecadent style, which is so popular nowadays, its preciosity offended me; and I particularly objected to its heroine, a young woman of a type which, if met in real life, only ingrained chivalry could have prevented a normal man from kicking extremely hard. Having

"William," said Jane, and her voice trembled a little, "what day is it to-day?" William looked at her over the paper, surprised.

skimmed through it, I gave my copy to the man who came to inspect the drains. If I had any feeling about the thing, it was a reflection that, if Rodney Spelvin had had to get a novel out of his system, this was just the sort of novel he was bound to write. I remember experiencing a thankfulness that he had gone so entirely out of Jane's life. How little I knew!

JANE, like every other woman in the village, had bought her copy of "The Purple Fan." She read it surreptitiously, keeping it concealed, when not in use, beneath a cushion on the Chesterfield. It was not its general tone that caused her to do this, but rather the subconscious feeling that she, a good wife, ought not to be deriving quite so much enjoyment from the work of a man who had occupied for a time such a romantic place in her life.

For Jane, unlike myself, adored the book. Eulalie French, its heroine, whose appeal I had so missed, seemed to her the most fascinating creature she had ever encountered.

She had read the thing through six times when, going up to town one day to do some shopping, she ran into Rodney Spelvin. They found themselves standing side by side on the pavement, waiting for the traffic to pass.

"Rodney!" gasped Jane.

It was a difficult moment for Rodney Spelvin. Five years had passed since he had last seen Jane, and in those five years so many delightful creatures had made a fuss of him that the memory of the girl to whom he had once been engaged for a few weeks had become a little blurred. In fact, not to put too fine a point on it, he had forgotten Jane altogether. The fact that she had addressed him by his first name seemed to argue that they must have met at some time somewhere; but, though he strained his brain, absolutely nothing stirred.

The situation was one that might have embarrassed another man, but Rodney

Spelvin was a quick thinker. He saw at a glance that Jane was an extremely pretty girl, and it was his guiding rule in life never to let anything like that get past him. So he clasped her hand warmly, allowed an expression of amazed delight to sweep over his face, and gazed tensely into her eyes.

"You!" he murmured, playing it safe. "You, little one!"

Jane stood five feet seven in her stockings and had a fore-arm like the village blacksmith's, but she liked being called "little one."

"How strange that we should meet like this!" she said, blushing brightly.

"After all these years," said Rodney Spelvin, taking a chance. It would be a nuisance if it turned out that they had met at a studio-party the day before yesterday, but something seemed to tell him that she dated back a goodish way. Besides, even if they had met the day before yesterday, he could get out of it by saying that the hours had seemed like years. For you cannot stymie these modern poets. The boys are there.

"More than five," murmured Jane.

"Now where the deuce was I five years ago?" Rodney Spelvin asked himself.

Jane looked down at the pavement and shuffled her left shoe nervously.

"I got the violets, Rodney," she said.

Rodney Spelvin was considerably fogged, but he came back strongly.

"That's good!" he said. "You got the violets? That's capital. I was wondering if you would get the violets."

"It was like you to send them."

Rodney blinked, but recovered himself immediately. He waved his hand with a careless gesture, indicative of restrained nobility.

"Oh, as to that——!"

"Especially as I'm afraid I treated you rather badly. But it really was for the happiness of both of us that I broke off the engagement. You do understand that, don't you?"

A light broke upon Rodney Spelvin. He had been confident that it would if he only stalled along for awhile. Now he placed this girl. She was Jane something, the girl he had been engaged to. By Jove, yes. He knew where he was now.

"Do not let us speak of it," he said, registering pain. It was quite easy for him to do this. All there was to it was tightening the lips and drawing up the left eyebrow. He had practised it in front of his mirror, for a fellow never knew when it might not come in useful.

"So you didn't forget me, Rodney?"

"Forget you!"

There was a short pause.

"I read your novel," said Jane. "I loved it."

She blushed again, and the colour in her cheeks made her look so remarkably pretty that Rodney began to feel some of the emotions which had stirred him five years ago. He decided that this was a good thing and wanted pushing along.

"I hoped that you might," he said in a low voice, massaging her hand. He broke off and directed into her eyes a look of such squashy sentimentality that Jane reeled where she stood. "I wrote it for you," he added, simply.

Jane gasped.

"For me?"

"I supposed you would have guessed," said Rodney. "Surely you saw the dedication?"

"The Purple Fan" had been dedicated, after Rodney Spelvin's eminently prudent fashion, to "One Who Will Understand." He had frequently been grateful for the happy inspiration.

"The dedication?"

"'To One Who Will Understand,'" said Rodney, softly. "Who would that be but you?"

"Oh, Rodney!"

"And didn't you recognize Eulalie, Jane? Surely you cannot have failed to recognize Eulalie?"

"Recognize her?"

"I drew her from you," said Rodney Spelvin.

JANE'S mind was in a whirl as she went home in the train. To have met Rodney Spelvin again was enough in itself to stimulate into activity that hidden pulse of romance in her. To discover that she had been in his thoughts so continuously all these years and that she still held such sway over his faithful heart that he had drawn the heroine of his novel from her was simply devastating. Mechanically she got out at the right station and mechanically made her way to the cottage. She was relieved to find that William was still out on the links. She loved William devotedly, of course, but just at the moment he would have been in the way; for she wanted a quiet hour with "The Purple Fan." It was necessary for her to re-read in the light of this new knowledge the more important of the scenes in which Eulalie French figured. She knew them practically by heart already, but nevertheless she wished to read them again. When William returned, warm and jubilant, she was so absorbed that she only just had time to slide the book under the sofa-cushion before the door opened.

Some guardian angel ought to have warned

William Bates that he was selecting a bad moment for his re-entry into the home, or at least to have hinted that a preliminary wash and brush-up would be no bad thing. There had been rain in the night, causing the links to become a trifle soggy in spots, and William was one of those energetic golfers who do not spare themselves. The result was that his pleasant features were a good deal obscured by mud. An explosion-shot out of the bunker on the fourteenth had filled his hair with damp sand, and his shoes were a disgrace to any refined home. No, take him for all in all, William did not look his best. He was fine if the sort of man you admired was the brawny athlete straight from the dust of the arena; but on a woman who was picturing herself the heroine of "The Purple Fan" he was bound to jar. Most of the scenes in which Eulalie French played anything like a fat part took place either on moonlight terraces or in beautifully furnished studios beneath the light of Oriental lamps with pink silk shades, and all the men who came in contact with her—except her husband, a clodhopping brute who spent most of his time in riding-kit—were perfectly dressed and had dark, clean-cut, sensitive faces.

William, accordingly, induced in Jane something closely approximating to the heeby-jeebies.

"Hullo, old girl!" said William, affectionately. "You back? What have you been doing with yourself?"

Rodney directed into her eyes a look of such squashy sentimentality that Jane reeled.

"Oh, shopping," said Jane, listlessly.

"See anyone you knew?"

For a moment Jane hesitated.

"Yes," she said. "I met Rodney Spelvin."

Jealousy and suspicion had been left entirely out of William Bates's make-up. He did not start and frown; he did not clutch the arm of his chair; he merely threw back his head and laughed like a hyæna. And that laugh wounded Jane more than the most violent exhibition of mistrust could have done.

"Good Lord!" gurgled William, jovially. "You don't mean to say that bird is still going around loose? I should have thought he would have been lynched years ago. Looks like negligence somewhere."

There comes a moment in married life when every wife gazes squarely at her husband and the scales seem to fall from her eyes and she sees him as he is—one of Nature's Class A fatheads. Fortunately for married men, these times of clear vision do not last long, or there would be few homes left unbroken. It was so that Jane gazed at William now, but unhappily her conviction that he was an out-size in rough-neck chumps did not pass. Indeed, all through that evening it deepened. That night she went to bed feeling for the first time that, when the clergyman had said "Wilt thou, Jane?" and she had replied in the affirmative, a mean trick had been played on an inexperienced girl.

AND so began that black period in the married life of Jane and William Bates, the mere recollection of which in after years was sufficient to put them right off their short game and even to affect their driving from the tee. To William, having no clue to the cause of the mysterious change in his wife, her behaviour was inexplicable. Had not her perfect robustness made such a theory absurd, he would have supposed that she was sickening for something. She golfed now intermittently, and often with positive reluctance. She was frequently listless and distrait. And there were other things about her of which he disapproved.

"I say, old girl," he said one evening, "I know you won't mind my mentioning it, and I don't suppose you're aware of it yourself, but recently you've developed a sort of silvery laugh. A nasty thing to have about the home. Try to switch it off, old bird, would you mind?"

Jane said nothing. The man was not worth answering. All through the pages of "The Purple Fan," Eulalie French's silvery laugh had been highly spoken of and greatly appreciated by one and all. It was the thing about her that the dark, clean-cut, sensitive-faced men most admired. And the view Jane took of the matter was that if William did not like it the poor fish could do the other thing.

But this brutal attack decided her to come out into the open with the grievance which had been vexing her soul for weeks past.

"William," she said, "I want to say something. William, I am feeling stifled."

"I'll open the window."

"Stifled in this beastly little village, I mean," said Jane, impatiently. "Nobody ever does anything here except play golf and bridge, and you never meet an artist-soul from one year's end to the other. How can I express myself? How can I be myself? How can I fulfil myself?"

"Do you want to?" asked William, somewhat out of his depth.

"Of course I want to. And I sha'n't be happy unless we leave this ghastly place and go to live in a studio in town."

William sucked thoughtfully at his pipe. It was a tense moment for a man who hated metropolitan life as much as he did. Nevertheless, if the solution of Jane's recent weirdness was simply that she had got tired of the country and wanted to live in town, to the town they must go. After a first involuntary recoil, he nerved himself to the martyrdom like the fine fellow he was.

"We'll pop off as soon as I can sell the house," he said.

"I can't wait as long as that. I want to go now."

"All right," said William, amiably. "We'll go next week."

WILLIAM'S forebodings were quickly fulfilled. Before he had been in the Metropolis ten days he realized that he was up against it as he had never been up against it before. He and Jane and little Braid Vardon had established themselves in what the house-agent described as an attractive bijou studio-apartment in the heart of the artistic quarter. There was a nice bedroom for Jane, a delightful cupboard for Braid Vardon, and a cosy corner behind a Japanese screen for William. Most compact. The rest of the place consisted of a room with a large skylight, handsomely furnished with cushions and samovars, where Jane gave parties to the intelligentsia.

It was these parties that afflicted William as much as anything else. He had not realized that Jane intended to run a *salon*. His idea of a pleasant social evening was to have a couple of old friends in for a rubber of bridge, and the almost nightly incursion of a horde of extraordinary birds in floppy ties stunned him. He was unequal to the situation from the first. While Jane sat enthroned on her cushion, exchanging gay badinage with rising young poets and laughing that silvery laugh of hers, William would have to stand squashed in a corner, trying to hold off some bobbed-haired female who wanted his opinion of Augustus John.

The strain was frightful, and, apart from the sheer discomfort of it, he found to his consternation that it was beginning to affect his golf. Whenever he struggled out from the artistic zone now to one of the suburban courses, his jangled nerves unfitted him for decent play. Bit by bit his game left him. First he found that he could not express himself with the putter. Then he began to fail to be himself with the mashie-niblick. And when at length he discovered that he

While Jane sat enthroned on her cushion, William would stand in a corner, trying to hold off some bobbed-haired female who wanted his opinion of Augustus John.

was only fulfilling himself about every fifth shot off the tee he felt that this thing must stop.

THE conscientious historian will always distinguish carefully between the events leading up to a war and the actual occurrence resulting in the outbreak of hostilities. The latter may be, and generally is, some almost trivial matter, whose only importance is that it fulfils the function of the last straw. In the case of Jane and William what caused the definite rift was Jane's refusal to tie a can to Rodney Spelvin.

The author of "The Purple Fan" had been from the first a leading figure in Jane's *salon*. Most of those who attended these functions were friends of his, introduced by him, and he had assumed almost from the beginning the demeanour of a master of the revels. William, squashed into his corner, had long gazed at the man with sullen dislike, yearning to gather him up by the slack of his trousers and heave him into outer darkness; but it is improbable that he would have overcome his native amiabi ity sufficiently to make any active move, had it not been for the black mood caused by his rotten golf. But one evening, when, coming home after doing the Mossy Heath course in five strokes over the hundred, he found the studio congested with Rodney Spelvin and his friends, many of them playing ukaleles, he decided that flesh and blood could bear the strain no longer.

As soon as the last guest had gone he delivered his ultimatum.

"Listen, Jane," he said. "Touching on this Spelvin bloke."

"Well?" said Jane, coldly. She scented battle from afar.

"He gives me a pain in the neck."

"Really?" said Jane, and laughed a silvery laugh.

"Don't do it, old girl," pleaded William, wincing.

"I wish you wouldn't call me 'old girl.'"

"Why not?"

'Because I don't like it."

"You used to like it."

"Well, I don't now."

"Oh!" said William, and ruminated awhile. "Well, be that as it may," he went on, "I want to tell you just one thing. Either you throw the bloke Spelvin out on his left ear and send for the police if he tries to get in again, or I push off. I mean it! I absolutely push off."

There was a tense silence.

"Indeed?" said Jane at last.

"Positively push off," repeated William, firmly. "I can stand a lot, but pie-faced Spelvin tries human endurance too high."

"He is not pie-faced," said Jane, warmly.

"He *is* pie-faced," insisted William. "Come round to the Vienna Bon-Ton Bakery to-morrow and I will show you an individual custard-pie that might be his brother."

"Well, I am certainly not going to be bullied into giving up an old friend just because——"

William stared.

"You mean you won't hand him the mitten?"

"I will not."

"Think what you are saying, Jane. You positively decline to give this false-alarm the quick exit?"

"I do."

"Then," said William, "all is over. I pop off."

Jane stalked without a word into her bedroom. With a mist before his eyes William began to pack. After a few moments he tapped at her door.

"Jane."

"Well?"

"I'm packing."

"Indeed?"

"But I can't find my spare mashie."

"I don't care."

William returned to his packing. When it was finished, he stole to her door again. Already a faint stab of remorse was becoming blended with his just indignation.

"Jane."

"Well?"

"I've packed."

"Really?"

"And now I'm popping."

There was silence behind the door.

"I'm popping, Jane," said William. And in his voice, though he tried to make it cold and crisp, there was a note of wistfulness.

Through the door there came a sound. It was the sound of a silvery laugh. And as he heard it William's face hardened. Without another word he picked up his suit-case and golf-bag, and with set jaw strode out into the night.

ONE of the things that tend to keep the home together in these days of modern unrest is the fact that exalted moods of indignation do not last. William, released from the uncongenial atmosphere of the studio, proceeded at once to plunge into an orgy of golf that for awhile precluded regret. Each day he indulged his starved soul with fifty-four holes, and each night he sat smoking in bed, pleasantly fatigued, reviewing the events of the past twelve hours with complete satisfaction. It seemed to him that he had done the good and sensible thing.

And then, slowly at first, but day by day more rapidly, his mood began to change. That delightful feeling of jolly freedom ebbed away.

It was on the morning of the tenth day that he first became definitely aware that all was not well. He had strolled out on the links after breakfast with a brassy and a dozen balls for a bit of practice, and, putting every ounce of weight and muscle into the stroke, brought off a snifter with his very first shot. Straight and true the ball sped for the distant green, and William, forgetting everything in the ecstasy of the moment, uttered a gladsome cry.

"How about that one, old girl?" he exclaimed.

And then, with a sudden sinking of the heart, he realized that he was alone.

An acute spasm of regret shot through William's massive bosom. In that instant of clear thinking he understood that golf is not all. What shall it profit a man that he do the long hole in four, if there is no loving wife at his elbow to squeak congratulations? A dull sensation of forlorn emptiness afflicted William Bates. It passed, but it had been. And he knew it would come again.

It did. It came that same afternoon. It came next morning. Gradually it settled like a cloud on his happiness. He did his best to fight it down. He increased his day's output to sixty-three holes, but found no relief. When he reflected that he had had the stupendous luck to be married to a girl like Jane and had chucked the thing up, he could have kicked himself round the house. He was in exactly the position of the hero of the movie when the sub-title is flashed on the screen: "Came a Day When Remorse Bit Like An Adder Into Roland Spenlow's Soul." Of all the chumps who had ever tripped over themselves and lost a good thing, from Adam downwards, he, he told himself, was the woollen-headedest.

On the fifteenth morning it began to rain.

NOW, William Bates was not one of your fair-weather golfers. It took more than a shower to discourage him. But this was real rain, with which not even the stoutest enthusiast could cope. It poured down all day in a solid sheet and set the seal on his melancholy. He pottered about the house, sinking deeper and deeper into the slough of despond, and was trying to derive a little faint distraction from practising putts into a tooth-glass when the afternoon post arrived.

There was only one letter. He opened it listlessly. It was from Jukes, Enderby, and Miller, florists, and what the firm wished to ascertain was whether, his deposit on white violets to be dispatched annually to Mrs. William Bates being now exhausted, he desired to renew his esteemed order. If so, on receipt of the money they would spring to the task of sending same.

William stared at the letter dully. His first impression was that Jukes, Enderby, and Miller were talking through their collective hats. White violets? What was all this drivel about white violets? Jukes was an ass. He knew nothing about white violets. Enderby was a fool. What had he got to do with white violets? Miller was a pin-head. He had never deposited any money to have white violets dispatched.

William gasped. Yes, by George, he had, though, he remembered with a sudden start. So he had, by golly! Good gosh! it all came back to him. He recalled the whole thing, by Jove! Crikey, yes!

The letter swam before William's eyes. A wave of tenderness engulfed him. All that had passed recently between Jane and himself was forgotten—her weirdness, her wish to live in the Metropolis, her silvery laugh—everything. With one long, loving gulp, William Bates dashed a not unmanly tear from his eye and, grabbing a hat and raincoat, rushed out of the house and sprinted for the station.

AT about the hour when William flung himself into the train, Jane was sitting in her studio-apartment, pensively watching little Braid Vardon as he sported on the floor. An odd melancholy had gripped her. At first she had supposed that this was due to the rain, but now she was beginning to realize that the thing went much deeper than that. Reluctant though she was to confess it, she had to admit that what she was suffering from was a genuine soul-sadness, due entirely to the fact that she wanted William.

It was strange what a difference his going had made. William was the sort of fellow you shoved into a corner and forgot about, but when he was not there the whole scheme of things seemed to go blooey. Little by little, since his departure, she had found the fascination of her surroundings tending to wane, and the glamour of her new friends had dwindled noticeably. Unless you were in the right vein for them, Jane felt, they could be an irritating crowd. They smoked too many cigarettes and talked too much. And not far from being the worst of them, she decided, was Rodney Spelvin. It was with a sudden feeling of despair that she remembered that she had invited him to tea this afternoon and had got in a special seed-cake for the occasion. The last thing

in the world that she wanted to do was to watch Rodney Spelvin eating cake.

It is a curious thing about men of the Spelvin type, how seldom they really last. They get off to a flashy start and for a while convince impressionable girls that the search for a soul-mate may be considered formally over; but in a very short while reaction always sets in. There had been a time when Jane could have sat and listened to Rodney Spelvin for hours on end. Then she began to feel that from fifteen to twenty minutes was about sufficient. And now the mere thought of having to listen to him at all was crushing her like a heavy burden.

She had got thus far in her meditations when her attention was attracted to little Braid Vardon, who was playing energetically in a corner with some object which Jane could not distinguish in the dim light.

"What have you got there, dear?" she asked.

"Wah," said little Braid, a child of few words, proceeding with his activities.

Jane rose and walked across the room. A sudden feeling had come to her, the remorseful feeling that for some time now she had been neglecting the child. How seldom nowadays did she trouble to join in his pastimes!

"Let mother play too," she said, gently. "What are you playing? Trains?"

"Golf."

Jane uttered a sharp exclamation. With a keen pang she saw that what the child had got hold of was William's spare mashie. So he had left it behind after all! Since the night of his departure it must have been lying unnoticed behind some chair or sofa.

For a moment the only sensation Jane felt was an accentuation of that desolate feeling which had been with her all day. How many a time had she stood by William and watched him foozle with this club! Inextricably associated with him it was, and her eyes filled with sudden tears. And then she was abruptly conscious of a new, a more violent emotion, something akin to panic fear. She blinked, hoping against hope that she had been mistaken. But no. When she opened her eyes and looked again she saw what she had seen before.

The child was holding the mashie all wrong.

'Braid!" gasped Jane in an agony.

All the mother-love in her was shrieking at her, reproaching her. She realized now how paltry, how greedily self centred she had been. Thinking only of her own pleasures, how sorely she had neglected her duty as a mother! Long ere this, had she been worthy of that sacred relation, she would have been brooding over her child, teaching him at her knee the correct Vardon grip, shielding him from bad habits, seeing to it that he did not get his hands in front of the ball, putting him on the right path as regarded the slow back-swing. But, absorbed in herself, she had sacrificed him to her shallow ambitions. And now there he was, grasping the club as if it had been a spade and scooping with it like one of those twenty-four-handicap men whom the hot weather brings out on seaside links.

She shuddered to the very depths of her soul. Before her eyes there rose a vision of her son, grown to manhood, reproaching her. "If you had but taught me the facts of life when I was a child, mother," she seemed to hear him say, "I would not now be going round in a hundred and twenty, rising to a hundred and forty in anything like a high wind."

She snatched the club from his hands with a passionate cry. And at this precise moment in came Rodney Spelvin, all ready for tea.

"Ah, little one!" said Rodney Spelvin, gaily.

Something in her appearance must have startled him, for he stopped and looked at her with concern.

"Are you ill?" he asked.

Jane pulled herself together with an effort.

"No, quite well. Ha, ha!" she replied, hysterically.

She stared at him wildly, as she might have stared at a caterpillar in her salad. If it had not been for this man, she felt, she would have been with William in their snug little cottage, a happy wife. If it had not been for this man, her only child would have been laying the foundations of a correct swing under the eyes of a conscientious pro. If it had not been for this man—— She waved him distractedly to the door.

"Good-bye," she said. "Thank you so much for calling."

Rodney Spelvin gaped. This had been the quickest and most tealess tea-party he had ever assisted at.

"You want me to go?" he said, incredulously.

"Yes, go! go!"

Rodney Spelvin cast a wistful glance at the gate-leg table. He had had a light lunch, and the sight of the seed-cake affected him deeply. But there seemed nothing to be done. He moved reluctantly to the door.

"Well, good-bye," he said. "Thanks for a very pleasant afternoon."

"So glad to have seen you," said Jane, mechanically.

The door closed. Jane returned to her thoughts. But she was not alone for long. A few minutes later there entered the female cubist painter from downstairs, a manly

She stared at him wildly, as she might have stared at a caterpillar in her salad.

young woman with whom she had become fairly intimate.

"Oh, Bates, old chap!" said the cubist painter.

Jane looked up.

"Yes, Osbaldistone?"

"Just came in to borrow a cigarette. Used up all mine."

"So have I, I'm afraid."

"Too bad. Oh, well," said Miss Osbaldistone, resignedly, "I suppose I'll have to go out and get wet. I wish I had had the sense to stop Rodney Spelvin and send him. I met him on the stairs."

"Yes, he was in here just now," said Jane.

Miss Osbaldistone laughed in her hearty manly way.

"Good boy, Rodney," she said, "but too smooth for my taste. A little too ready with the salve."

"Yes?" said Jane, absently.

"Has he pulled that one on you yet about your being the original of the heroine of 'The Purple Fan'?"

"Why, yes," said Jane, surprised. "He did tell me that he had drawn Eulalie from me."

Her visitor emitted another laugh that shook the samovars.

"He tells every girl he meets the same thing."

"What?"

"Oh, yes. It's his first move. He actually had the nerve to try to spring it on me. Mind you, I'm not saying it's a bad stunt. Most girls like it. You're sure you've no cigarettes? No? Well, how about a shot of cocaine? Out of that too? Oh, well, I'll be going, then. Pip-pip, Bates."

"Toodle-oo, Osbaldistone," said Jane, dizzily. Her brain was reeling. She groped

her way to the table, and in a sort of trance cut herself a slice of cake.

"Wah!" said little Braid Vardon. He toddled forward, anxious to count himself in on the share-out.

Jane gave him some cake. Having ruined his life, it was, she felt, the least she could do. In a spasm of belated maternal love she also slipped him a jam-sandwich. But how trivial and useless these things seemed now.

"Braid!" she cried, suddenly.

"What?"

"Come here."

"Why?"

"Let mother show you how to hold that mashie."

"What's a mashie?"

A new gash opened in Jane's heart. Four years old, and he didn't know what a mashie was. And at only a slightly-advanced age Bobby Jones had been playing in the American Open Championship.

"This is a mashie," she said, controlling her voice with difficulty.

"Why?"

"It is called a mashie."

"What is?"

"This club."

"Why?"

The conversation was becoming too metaphysical for Jane. She took the club from him and closed her hands over it.

"Now, look, dear," she said, tenderly. "Watch how mother does it. She puts the fingers——"

A voice spoke, a voice that had been absent all too long from Jane's life.

"You'll pardon me, old girl, but you've got the right hand much too far over. You'll hook for a certainty."

In the doorway, large and dripping, stood William. Jane stared at him dumbly.

"William!" she gasped at length.

"Hullo, Jane!" said William. "Hullo, Braid! Thought I'd look in."

There was a long silence.

"Beastly weather," said William.

"Yes," said Jane.

"Wet and all that," said William.

"Yes," said Jane.

There was another silence.

"Oh, by the way, Jane," said William. "Knew there was something I wanted to say. You know those violets?"

"Violets?"

"White violets. You remember those white violets I've been sending you every year on our wedding anniversary? Well, what I mean to say, our lives are parted and all that sort of thing, but you won't mind if I go on sending them—what? Won't hurt you, what I'm driving at, and'll please me, see what I mean? So, well, to put the thing in a nutshell, if you haven't any objection, that's that."

Jane reeled against the gate-leg table.

"William! Was it you who sent those violets?"

"Absolutely. Who did you think it was?"

"William!" cried Jane, and flung herself into his arms.

William scooped her up gratefully. This was the sort of thing he had been wanting for weeks past. He could do with a lot of this. He wouldn't have suggested it himself, but, seeing that she felt that way, he was all for it.

"William," said Jane, "can you ever forgive me?"

"Oh, rather," said William. "Like a shot. Though, I mean to say, nothing to forgive, and all that sort of thing."

"We'll go back right away to our dear little cottage."

"Fine!"

"We'll never leave it again."

"Topping!"

"I love you," said Jane, "more than life itself."

"Good egg!" said William.

Jane turned with shining eyes to little Braid Vardon.

"Braid, we're going home with daddy!"

"Where?"

"Home. To our little cottage."

"What's a cottage?"

"The house where we used to be before we came here."

"What's here?"

"This is."

"Which?"

"Where we are now."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you what, old girl," said William. "Just shove a green-baize cloth over that kid, and then start in and brew me about five pints of tea as strong and hot as you can jolly well make it. Otherwise I'm going to get the cold of a lifetime."

(Another P. G. Wodehouse story next month.)

HOW OUR NOVELISTS WRITE THEIR BOOKS

A Symposium of Eminent Authors

II.

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT.

FOR many years Mr. Arnold Bennett used to have regular hours of work, but now is no longer a créature of habit in this respect. However, most of his work is done in the morning, though he never begins until eight o'clock at the earliest, whereas in the old days he would begin at six or six-thirty, or even five-thirty. He rarely works in the afternoon except under pressure of business, and never in any circumstances in the evening. He never writes fiction or articles twice over.

Hoppé.
MR. ARNOLD BENNETT.

CHAPTER I

IN THE SQUARE

I

Those two girls, Constance and Sophia Baines, paid no heed to the manifold interest of their situation, of which, indeed, they had never been conscious. They were, for example, established almost precisely on the fifty third parallel of latitude. A little way to the north of them, in the creases of a hill famous for its religious orgies, rose the river Trent, the calm and characteristic stream of middle England. Somewhat further northwards, in the near neighbourhood of the highest public house in the realm, rose two (later) other rivers, the Dane and the Dove, which, quarrelling in early infancy, turned their backs on each other, and, the one by favour of the Weaver and the other by favour of the Trent, watered between them the whole width of England and poured themselves respectively into the Irish Sea and the German Ocean. What a county of modest, unnoticed rivers! What a natural, simple county, content to fix its boundaries by these tortuous island-brooks with their comfortable names,—Trent, Mease, Dove, Tern, Dane, Moss, Stour, Tame, and even unpleasantly Severn! Not that the Severn is suitable to the county! In the county excess is deprecated. The county

The opening sentences of Mr. Arnold Bennett's masterpiece, "The Old Wives' Tale," show the beautiful handwriting he uses for his novels.

Mr. Bennett gets most of his ideas walking about the streets, and he does not sit down to write until he knows fairly exactly what he is going to say, and he scarcely ever makes any alterations. In the case of plays, however, he usually writes his stuff twice over, as he finds it impossible to fit together all the bits of dialogue at the first try. Plays have to be altered and altered; that is his experience. Indeed, they are never done until

the curtain goes up on the first performance. This does not mean that he will materially alter the structure of a play. No! But he will alter details endlessly.

Mr. Bennett has two styles of handwriting—one rather ordinary for articles, essays, etc., and another rather extraordinary for novels, short stories, etc., a most interesting example of which is reproduced on the preceding page—but both kinds are very small and quite different from the styles in which he writes letters. He never dictates anything—not even a letter. As regards correspondence, he finds it much easier to write letters in shorthand, by means of which for a number of years he earned his living forty years ago. His secretary then transcribes the shorthand note. "What beautiful shorthand you write!" said another secretary to Mr. Bennett's secretary in a certain office during the war. "That is Mr. Bennett's shorthand," his secretary replied. He is very proud of this unsolicited testimonial.

"GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM"
(Canon Hannay).

I ALWAYS have the greatest difficulty in beginning, and the first three or four chapters often have to be written seven or eight times before I really get started. After that I write fairly rapidly, usually about five thousand words a day, until I get the thing finished. Then I go all over it again, erasing and re-writing. Finally I dictate to a typist, making merely verbal alterations as I go.

Hoppé.
"GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM."

Plots are usually suggested to me by places or scenes. It seems to me as if certain things ought to happen in certain places, and my story is the history of such happenings. An island or two off the coast of Connaught suggested to me "Spanish Gold." The railway station of an Irish country town suggested "The Lost Lawyer." The dining-room of the Ritz Hotel in Budapest suggested "The Grand Duchess."

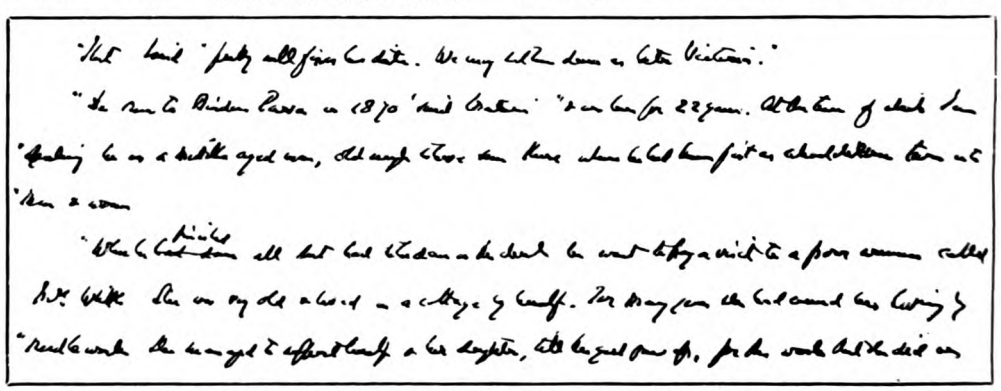
Characters more or less grow of themselves, and it is very rarely that I have taken traits and characteristics from people whom I have actually met.

I suppose, in reality, that any character in a book which has any vitality about it is a portrait of some side of the author himself, and that one does not get down on paper anything except what one is, or at all events might be.

SIR PHILIP GIBBS.

I SUPPOSE my journalistic training has governed my method as a writer of fiction. When I get hold of something vaguely resembling an idea I write it as though the printers were waiting for my copy to catch the early edition. Not for me is that mystic luxury known as waiting for inspiration.

I have none of those sensibilities which cause irritation and anguish sometimes to more exalted and delicate souls. Noise matters nothing to me. Piano organs may play in my neighbourhood, people may laugh, dance, or quarrel in the room where I work, but I go on writing, indifferent to the world about me. I can write fiction in the corner of a third-class carriage, or with my elbow on a *café* table, or sitting on a haystack, just as I used to write descriptive



A passage from "Bindon Parva," the novel which "George A. Birmingham" has just completed.

articles in any place and at any time in the most uncomfortable conditions.

But whereas in journalism one has one's subject set for one, in writing fiction one has to search for it beforehand, and I find that very difficult. To invent a plot seems to me the hardest thing in the world. I have never yet succeeded in producing one. Life does not work out in plots nicely constructed with a surprise at the end, according to the best recipes of short-story writing, and most of my attempts at plot are really elaborated reports of certain phases of life which I have observed.

Elliott & Fry.

SIR PHILIP GIBBS.

When I want to think out a short story I always start with a place. Then I think of the types of people I have met in that place and the problems or passions in which they are involved. Gene ly me particular character whom I happened to meet suggests himself or herself as a person who would be involved most sharply in the drama of that town or country. He or she would be in inevitable conflict with dominant prejudices, or the political situation, or the private passions of family or class, or the ideas of the time and people. It is this idea of conflict in ideas which gives me my clue to a narrative, and when once I have worked out that I find the rest easy, and begin my report of the case, which builds up in detail and description very much as though I were recording some chapter of contemporary history which I had investigated for a newspaper.

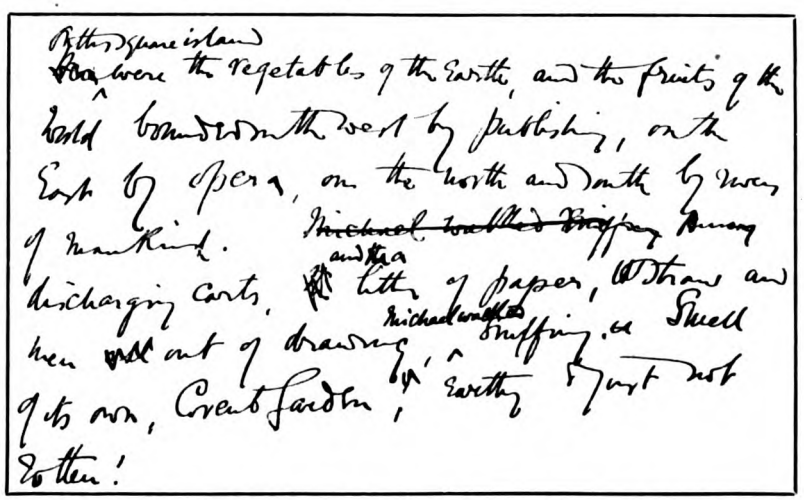
Critics say they are not short stories. I agree. No short story ought to be more than four thousand words in length. I find that I want nine or ten thousand before I begin to feel that my tale is told, and I only end there because there is a limit to the patience of readers and the space of editors. My novels are continuations of my attempts to write short stories. There is no reason why they should ever end—some people would say there is no reason why they should ever begin—except that I should die of nicotine poisoning unless I finished after a hundred and fifty thousand words. For I cannot work without smoking cigarettes.

MR. JOHN GALSWORTHY.

PERHAPS I can say that the main drifts of character and plot come to me spasmodically at odd moments in the silent watches. As to detail, it washes up from, I suppose, the subconscious into the conscious and blank mind of one sitting solitary and diligent in a chair. I never make scenarios, I do not write with a stylo, and I do not dictate.

Hoppé.

MR. JOHN GALSWORTHY.



From the MS. of Mr. John Galsworthy's new novel, "The White Monkey."

MR. THOMAS BURKE.

I AM not conscious of having any method of work. I do not look for scenes or characters or ideas. They come unsought, from the accumulated memories of years, and they arrange themselves without any help from me. I hate desk work, and do very little of it, except the typewriting of the final version.

Hoppé.

MR. THOMAS BURKE.

I have heard of men who sat down with a pad of paper and wrote a story or an essay or a chapter straight away, line by line, from the first sentence to the last; but I have never been able to work like this. I write wherever I happen to be, when the idea comes, sometimes on the staircase, sometimes in the bathroom; and I write on any scraps of paper available, and put it into form on the typewriter.

MISS I. A. R. WYLLIE.

IT is very difficult to say how my ideas come. The best come in a flash from nowhere—or, perhaps, from something in conversation—and lie tucked away in a kind of mental incubator until they hatch out in a complete state. Very rarely an idea is given me, and even then it is scarcely recognizable by the time I have made it my own. Most of my stories are concerned with some conflict or problem, so that I make my story first, as it were, and then create characters to get the situation.

Elliott & Fry.

MISS I. A. R. WYLLIE.

I ought, perhaps, to add that as conflicts and problems are very often the result of certain characters, I do not always begin with the plot. What I mean to convey is that my main interest is with the conflicts that arise in life. As to the actual writing, I write in longhand and have a horror both of typewriters and dictation. For one thing, I write very slowly, and for another, I have a real love for the feel of good paper and a smooth-running pen.

MR. RAFAEL SABATINI.

I FIND a certain difficulty in answering your main question on how I do my work, because, to be perfectly frank, I don't know. I am conscious of no law governing my work, and still less of any formula by which it is performed.

The assembling of ideas is with me at least as much the result of chance as of any deliberate design. Nor does the process by any means always follow the same course. Sometimes I begin by conceiving a situation, sometimes a single character, and sometimes I am attracted by a particular background.

Given any of these starting-points, the rest is comparatively easy. In one instance I began by fastening upon a title, "Scaramouche," and almost simultaneously came the phrase descriptive of the character: "He was born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." That supplied the opening line and the keynote of the book. With so much in hand, the setting readily suggested itself. How the actual story came I do not know. But the seed and the soil were found, and the rest followed somehow. I do not suppose I could be more definite about the genesis of any other book of mine.

But it must not be understood from this that I find the writing of books an easy task, which has a way of accomplishing itself. It is not. Usually I work very hard indeed, carrying my preliminary researches into all manner of bypaths and accumulating perhaps ten times more knowledge of the epoch I am treating than I ever need to display in the course of my narrative. Commonly I destroy a great deal of what I write. I do this whenever I feel that the attack is wrong, or discover that a better attack will be possible. But I make few alterations in what I actually write.

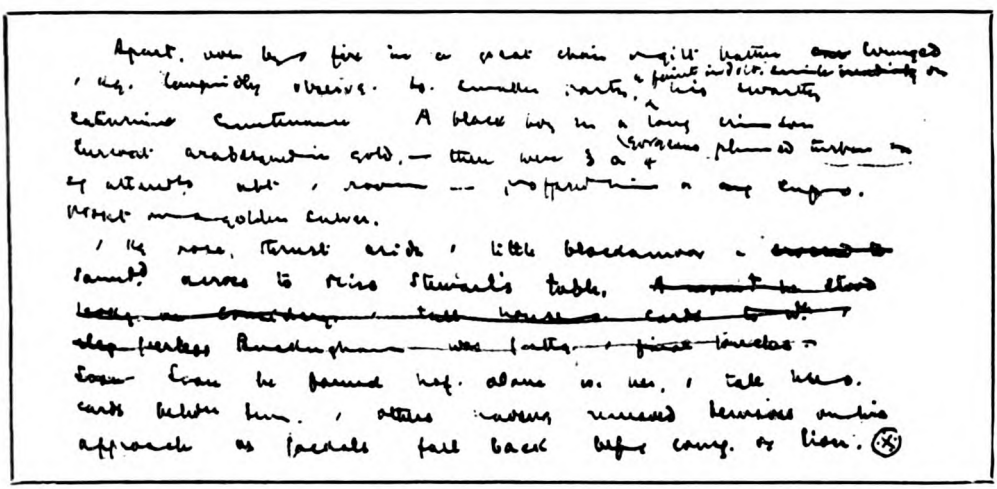
I am utterly incapable of dictating. That is, and always would be, a barrier to

Vaughan & Freeman.
MR. RAFAEL SABATINI.

the complete absorption and concentration at which I aim, and which I find it possible to reach only by actual writing. In fact, I am one of those possibly unfortunate persons who communicate their ideas only at the point of the pen.

like a freshly-raked flower-bed—closes his eyes, and waits, until presently a new idea comes pushing its way up to the surface like a mushroom ?

I defy him to make any such statement, because ideas do not come into existence through spontaneous conception. They are engendered by contact with some outside agency, some casual incident in one's own daily life, some idle remark let fall in the course of a conversation, some episode witnessed in the street, an odd paragraph in a newspaper, or a chance encounter with some individual of whom you suddenly say to yourself, " I wonder how that man would act in such and such a situation ? " The idea thus engendered is sometimes a very tiny one, the merest germ ; but it sets you going.



From the story of the Fall of Clarendon in Mr. Rafael Sabatini's " Historical Nights' Entertainments."

"IAN HAY"
(Major J. H. Beith).

I WRITE with great difficulty, and increasing years do not seem to make me any more facile. I do not suppose I have ever published a sentence just as it was originally written ; most of them were not even grammatical to begin with. It is only by constant pruning and elimination that I can get any results at all.

As for the plot—the imaginative part of the work—I have always held that there is no such thing as literary imagination. You simply can't produce something from nothing. Can any author lay his hand on his heart and declare that when he wants to write a story he simply sits down, makes his mind nice and smooth and blank—

Sometimes it disappears entirely as the story progresses. Still, without it you could never have started at all. Therefore literary imagination seems to me to be summed up in the word Observation.

When you say that an author has an original mind or a great fund of imagination, all you really mean is that he has the gift

Vandyk.
"IAN HAY" (Major J. H. Beith).

of recognizing an idea the moment he sees it and making the utmost of its possibilities. I can turn to most of my published works and put my finger on some obscure little episode and say: "That really happened, and it started this story."

MR. EDGAR JEPSON.

I NEVER sit down to think of a short story; if they do not come of themselves, they do not come to me at all. They come from all kinds of things: from an experience, an incident, a person seen, a character imagined, from a casual remark, an interesting object. One of the best short stories I have written of recent years—at least I had letters praising it from places hundreds and thousands of miles apart—was suggested by a girl's face under a red hat at a lecture I was delivering.

The short story that comes out of my own experience does not seem to come till years after that experience—"emotion remembered in tranquillity," I suppose. If I think of an out-of-the-way character, he or she will often prove a mine of short stories. It comes of my being interested only in what Henley called "companions of the will," persons, that is, who are significant manifestations of the Life Force, and not in rotters. Round such persons, young or old, male or female, incidents, mostly adventurous, naturally gather.

Also other short-story writers have quite unknowingly given me short stories. One of them, just back from the war, said to me: "I often feel that I should like to have a meal in comfort on the floor." He could never have seen a short story in the desire; I could. Another said to me: "I've just been talking to a millionaire, and he was complaining that he could never get a decent steak in his own house." He could never have seen a short story in the complaint; I could. But then I write a different kind of short story. Lately I have been writing short stories about some of my Oriental objects of art, a Japanese sword-guard, pieces of jade. They seem to stir my fancy; and adventures gather round them.

Basil.

MR. EDGAR JEPSON.

I never work out the plot of a short story before beginning to write it. I begin it and let it build itself up. It seems the best way of writing the kind of short story I write. But then I do not start on the story directly the idea comes to me; I let it simmer. Perhaps if I did work out the plot I should write them more quickly.

It usually takes me from a fortnight to three weeks to write a short story, and as a rule I dictate them. My novels, also, are mostly dictated. It does not make my hand ache.

MISS MARJORIE BOWEN.

I SELDOM, if ever, know definitely how a main theme will evolve itself. After it has been roughly composed the characters are visualized, and the actions of these characters invariably create minor themes in themselves. Then colour, atmosphere, etc., are applied to emphasize or diminish the character, the theme, or the incident, according to their proportions or types.

Hoppé.

MISS MARJORIE BOWEN.

Every word I have ever published has been written with my own hand, and an ordinary pen, on ordinary ruled foolscap. I am rarely at a loss for a new idea, and my work flows easily, once the story has commenced, until it is ended. I can always throw myself, as it were, into any situation or period that I happen to be engaged upon.

I work on an average three to four hours a day, and I am little affected by annoyances and irritations around me. This may be due to application and to a certain power for existing in my characters and places, without much feeling as to my surroundings at the moment.

I dislike intensely to re-read my MSS. or to have them read to me. During the writing of a novel I exist, to the finish, with the characters and actions, spiritually perhaps. After its completion I feel a slight depression, as if I have left real people with whom I have been living.

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE.

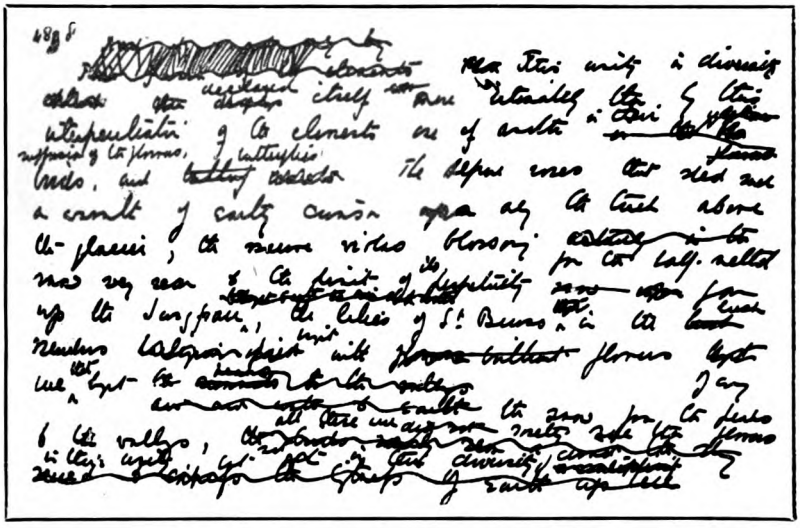
THE conception of and preliminary work on a book are likely to be different every time, and it would be idle in a short space to discuss that side of the business.

The actual process of writing varies according to the pressure under which I am doing my work, but it usually takes me many hours to produce comparatively few words. When I am working hard, which is for eleven months of the year, I like to get into my chair as soon after five o'clock in the afternoon as possible, for, suffering as I do from sciatica, I can only work in one of those invalid chairs the perfect type of which, for a writer, has not yet been invented. The gramophone plays the whole time, and at eight o'clock I have dinner alone; at nine I get back into my chair, and the gramophone plays till eleven. From eleven till half-past one the pianola plays, and I go to bed about two, thankful indeed if I have produced fifteen hundred words.

Russell.

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE.

I usually read for another hour in bed, preferably a murder trial or a book of voyages. I sleep till about midday, eat no lunch, and take scarcely any exercise, for I have found that the less exercise I take when I am working the better I am, and for me the perfect form of exercise is ferreting and shooting rabbits. But when I am working really hard, which is, roughly, when I reach the second half of every book I write, I do not interrupt my evening with dinner, and do not stop working until four or five o'clock, or even six and seven in the morning. Then I eat a lot of bread and cheese, drink plenty of beer, and perhaps walk round the island* if the sun is shining, after which I sleep till two or three in the afternoon.



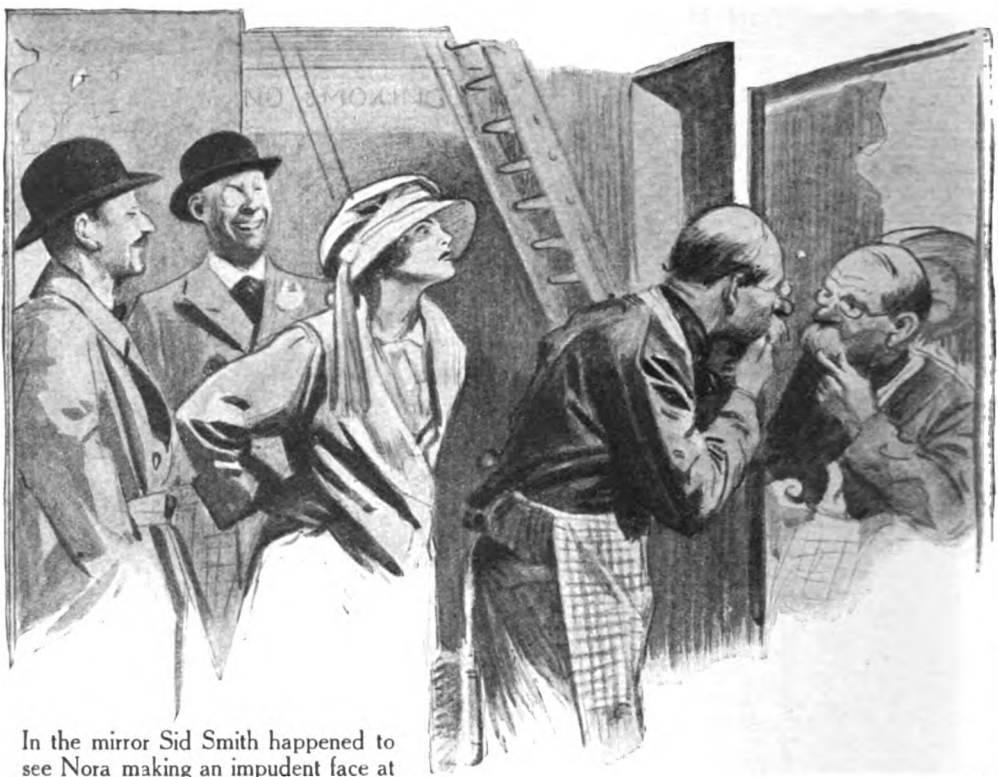
A passage from Mr. Compton Mackenzie's novel, "The Heavenly Ladder."

I have tried dictating to relieve the strain of sitting so long in a chair, or when I have been ill in bed, which in the years just after the war was unfortunately very often; but I found that it made my writing glib and rhetorical, so I gave it up. I envy the exquisite complicacy of Henry James's dictated style and the equally exquisite simplicity of Mr. George Moore's, both of which were achieved by dictation.

When I once get into the rhythm of hard work, I have produced about three thousand words in twelve hours, and in the case of "The Heavenly Ladder" I produced as much nightly for a month at a stretch. One of my chief difficulties is to hammer the Latinity out of my style. I wrote tolerable Latin prose long before I could write anything at all like English, and even to this day as soon as I take up a pen the first form of every sentence of narrative is Latin. Mercifully I can write dialogue as fast as many people can speak it, and dialogue is the swing on which I pick up what I lose on the roundabout of narrative.

* *Jethou—one of the Channel Islands.*

(*To be continued.*)



In the mirror Sid Smith happened to see Nora making an impudent face at the nape of his neck.

HOUSE TO LET

BY

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

I.

WHEN the great Sid Smith came down from his dressing-room into the wings of the stage of the Victoria Empire (usually pronounced by its patrons as though it was written "Victoria Rempire"), Miss Nella Nora, his "lead," and the two young men who completed the cast of Sid's sketch, "House to Let," were already waiting. The stage-manager, absorbed in the sole idea of flying time, was also waiting, with his eye on the clock. The orchestra was getting towards the end of the "Selection" which divided the performance into two halves. Sid's sketch always came next after the "Selection," because the "Selection" gave the stage hands fair opportunity to "set" the stage for the sketch; the Victoria Empire, though a large and prosperous music-hall, engaging some first-rate talent, did not possess one of those whirring, revolving stages which enable a scene to be set at the back while another one is being used at the front.

Sid Smith casually glanced at his wig in the long mirror hung for the use of artistes by the side of the assistant stage-manager's little lair, and he happened to see, in addition

Copyright, 1924, by Arnold Bennett.

to his wig, Miss Nella Nora making an impudent face at the nape of his neck, and then giving a pert smile to the two young men as if saying to them :—

" Look what *I* think of the old codger ! "

Now to understand the full enormity of Nella's gesture it is necessary to grasp the high importance of Sid Smith in the ranks of his profession. For fifteen years at least Sid had toured the provinces as a music-hall comedian, had had a certain success, and had rarely been out of an engagement ; but he had never reached the top-line of a bill. Then one night in an emergency he had been whisked off to the Alhambra from the Holloway Palace (which theatre, though only a few miles distant from the Alhambra, is morally as far away from it as John o' Groat's) ; his appearance on the classic stage of Leicester Square had been heralded by the words " Deputy Turn " in the illuminated number-frame ; a quarter of an hour later, by exactly the same kind of performance as he had been doing for over a decade in provincial towns, he had torrentially brought the house down, and was deranging the whole remainder of the programme by his extra encores. On the following day the " Stone Palaces Circuit " had agreed to cancel his contract and give him a new and immensely superior contract ; and in a fortnight he was a top-line star.

Such are the hazards of life. Sid Smith was surely a common enough name ; yet now it was differentiated from all the other million Smiths ; and nobody asked " Who is Sid Smith ? " because everybody knew. At the Victoria Empire Sid was receiving three hundred and fifty pounds a week for his sketch, which cost him much less than fifty pounds a week in salaries. His name and no other name burned on the façade of the theatre. When patrons booked seats many of them would ask : " What time does Sid Smith come on ? " Sid Smith filled the house ; he did not fill merely the " second house " of a night ; he filled the " first house," which began at six-fifteen. Even Sir Joshua, the managing director of the V. E. and of various other music-halls, treated Sid as an equal, and ordinary persons were proud to be seen in his society. Lastly, when his programme number shone in the number-frame, it was always greeted with applause—the audience apparently not being able to wait for the sight of the actual man on the stage to express its gratification.

Considering that Nella Nora's salary was ten pounds a week, that Sid could have got fifty other girls to play her part at the same salary, that she was a mere chit without experience and without marked talent, that Sid had the right to sack her at any time on a fortnight's notice, and that in a word she was nobody at all—considering these matters, the enormity of her ribald gesture could not easily have been exaggerated. Sid Smith believed she fancied herself because she happened to be the granddaughter of the Great Macdoodle, a super-star comedian of the music-halls in the 'eighties and 'nineties, long since retired but not wholly forgotten ; he held the reason to be an inadequate one.

II.

IN the very famous sketch " House to Let," Sid Smith played the part of a caretaker.

The scene was the reception hall of a large tenantless house, with doors here and there all round, and a grand staircase leading to the upper storeys. (The staircase, of course, curved away out of sight of the audience, and the persons who climbed it, when they also were out of sight of the audience, found themselves at the edge of nothing except a step-ladder.) The plot of the sketch was concerned with a young house-agent's clerk and with a rich young couple on the eve of a clandestine marriage who dallied with the idea of taking the house and who incidentally used the house as a place of meeting. There was also a telephone. Why the landlord should have been fool enough to keep a working telephone in an empty house was not explained ; and anyhow it was not a real telephone ; it was only a stage telephone, put there so that Sid could be side-splitting into it. Sid's telephonic conversations with the police, the fire-brigade, the house-agent's office, the doctor, the post-office, and the dairy shop made a large part of the success of the piece. Then there was the caretaker's maiden aunt, for whom he had a nephew's passion ; a strange creature who did not appear at all, but from whom he received letters of advice and to whom he wrote letters describing the fearsome things that happened to him in the course of his calling as a caretaker.

And in fact the things that did happen to him were of the most astonishing kind, and the deeds which he performed in order to cope with the dilemmas into which he fell were even more astonishing. He—that is, the caretaker—was a muddle-headed, untidy, dirty, rather besotted old man, very slow of speech, very slow in the uptake, very ready to take tips—nay, bribes, and quite capable for his own private purposes of repelling all desirable prospective tenants. (Why, he argued with himself, should he help to let the house when the letting of it would deprive him of a job upon which he entirely depended for a livelihood ?) On the other hand, he could be fatherly

in an agreeable, benevolent way, and would continually offer sound worldly advice to all the young characters in the piece. Further, although muddle-headed, he had moments of startling insight and rapidity of thought and action; you thought you were deceiving his simplicity for your own ends, but you were not; indeed, in one of his moments of vision and decision he succeeded in locking up the three other characters in three different rooms—a singular proceeding on the part of a humble, stupid caretaker! His snatches of letters to his well-loved, unseen aunt, and the snatches of letters received from her, convulsed the audience from gallery down to fauteuils. And his every remark was so contrived by the author, and so uttered by the strange, rich, juicy genius of Sid Smith, as to draw laughter, and cataracts of laughter. If any of his lines failed to cause considerable amusement, those lines were cut and better lines substituted.

Thus, despite his wicked, unscrupulous, dishonest, idiotic disposition, the caretaker was as deeply adored by the audience as the maiden aunt was deeply adored by the caretaker. And twice every night Sid Smith was called before the curtain again and again to bow to ovations which he had thoroughly deserved.

It should be mentioned that none of the other characters had lines to raise laughter. If in practice it was found that they had, the lines were cut and dull lines substituted, or the players were instructed to say them in a different and duller manner. And why not? The show was Sid Smith's show; Sid Smith had all the talent; and the audience came and paid to see Sid Smith—not a trio of mediocre nonentities. Sid would have preferred—and justifiably—to do a sketch in which figured one character only—himself; but such a sketch was not to be had. He was therefore bound to employ other artistes: they were his necessary evil.

III.

As soon as he opened the front-door of the empty house for Nella Nora, the great Sid Smith perceived that she meant mischief. She followed him down the stage, but not far enough. "Come below me," he muttered to her in the midst of their first bit of dialogue. By which he meant: "Get nearer to the footlights than I am and turn towards me."

The audience of the Victoria Empire heard not the muttered order, nor did they reck of the complicated technique which goes to the making of a star's success. It did not occur to them that the first rule in a music-hall star turn is that the star should always keep his expressive face in full view of his admirers; nor did they ask themselves how he could possibly accomplish this if he had to talk to a partner who kept *her* face in full view of his admirers. (Not *her* admirers—she had none!) In these painful circumstances the star is obliged either to talk at the audience, ignoring his partner, or to turn away from the audience so as to confront his partner. Nella Nora simply did not obey the muttered order. There she stuck, displaying her dark, chubby, pretty, simpering, extremely youthful features to the audience; and Sid Smith, being an artist, felt himself compelled to deprive the audience of his own features. Sid was furious. But he dared not show his fury; he dared not even let his fury possess him, lest it might spoil his acting. He was helpless; he was at the mercy of the chit. He could do nothing whatever—short of walking right off the stage in dudgeon, or telling the assistant stage-manager to ring down the curtain. At rehearsals, and before and after shows, he was the boss and could enforce obedience; but with the curtain up he was an actor with no more power than the meanest of his troupe. Thus as the sketch proceeded he had to continue being benevolent to the chit; he had to hide all his anguish.

However, when the telephone-bell rang he fairly let himself loose on the telephone, with a movement and a tone which brought a roar of joy from the house but no joy to his heart. The roar did not blind him to the fact that his performance was suffering. He thought that Nella Nora must have gone mad. Why else should she risk her livelihood by this inexcusable vagary?

Nella Nora next broke the second rule in a music-hall star turn. She was deliberately "slow on her cues," by which is meant that she deliberately delayed her replies to the caretaker's remarks, holding up the action of the piece and generally impairing effects. Her tendency had always been in this direction.

Sid Smith began to forget his own lines, and once the minx audibly prompted him!

He still controlled himself, for his own sake, but with a most exhausting nervous effort, and he felt like a camel who sees the last straw being brought along. But at the end of the short scene, as he locked her in the little room on the O.P. side, he locked her in savagely, and in addition gave her *sotto voce*, with masterly brevity, a goodish piece of his mind. The mischief was that she actually won applause on her exit, which was an outrage upon professional etiquette. She had not been engaged to win applause; she had been engaged to help the star to win applause.

The next scene, with the two young men,

went better for Sid Smith. The two young men at any rate would never dare to play tricks on him; they probably had young wives to support, or chocolates and flowers to pay for; also they had sense, and a sense of decency too. The surcease was short. On her second entrance Nella Nora made clear her intention to break the third rule in a music-hall star turn. She simply would not stand stock-still and utterly expressionless while Sid Smith talked. Obviously every underling who attempts to act while the star talks distracts the attention of the audience from the star. Nella Nora improvised "business" of her own during Sid's wonderful back-chat—or perhaps she did not improvise it, perhaps she had carefully thought it all out beforehand! She actually got laughs; the audience actually laughed at her when it ought to have been laughing at Sid Smith! Sid swallowed the medicine as best he could, and he swallowed it nobly, because he was a man of vast experience; but if somebody had called out "Fire!" and so brought the safety curtain down and the show to an end he would have been rather pleased; and it is doubtful whether he would have been very annoyed to see Nella Nora a bit singed by the flames.

Well, he would dismiss her that very night! He would give her a fortnight's salary on the spot and send her packing. No, he could not quite do that, because he had no other pretty young woman trained and rehearsed to take her place.

Why was she trying to ruin him and to ruin herself? What was her grievance against him? He admitted that he had been rather severe with her on the previous night, had employed in his observations to her a vocabulary perhaps too free and varied. But if chits were to begin to resent plain speaking and expressive English from stars of the largest magnitude there was an end to discipline on the music-hall stage—indeed, there was an end to the British Empire and to the world itself!

When the curtain fell Sid fancied that the applause was less voluminous and frenetic than usual; but quite possibly the diminution existed only in Sid's deranged fancy. His worst trial came then; for it was etiquette that he should hand his leading lady before the curtain. A desolating ordeal! Involuntarily he crushed her frail little hand in his, crushed it with ferocity. She did not blench nor flinch. She just smiled and bowed—to the audience and to him—with an amazing impish sweetness.

"Now!" he said to himself, rolling up the shirt-sleeves of his soul for a fighting display as he followed her off the stage amid the hands who were "striking the set" and amid the acrobats who were waiting in the wings for their turn.

"Not very good to-night, Mr. Smith," said the assistant stage-manager to him.

"What the Hades do you mean?" Sid demanded, ferociously.

"Thirty-one minutes," said the assistant stage-manager, who judged every turn by its length.

The official allotted time for "House to Let" was twenty-nine minutes. Two minutes lost, and the A.S.M. knew well that he would never get them back!

"Here, you! Miss Springfield!" said Sid Smith. (Springfield was Nella Nora's name in the archives of the Registrar of Births.) She turned and faced him, still smiling, but rubbing her crushed hand.

"Getting your lines out of you's like drawing teeth out of a cow, that's what it's like!" said Sid, glaring at her. "And I told you the same last night."

"Yes, you did," answered Nella, with an astounding pertness. "And if you tell it me again to-morrow night I'm finished with you, Mr. Smith, *and* at once, and so I don't mind telling you."

She ran away, and he could say no more.

She had finished with *him*. *She* was threatening to get rid of *him*. Ah! She had youth, her prettiness, her charm; and she was trading on them. That was it! Sid Smith was very unhappy, chiefly because he did not know what to do. Fortunately the acrobats were Italian and did not understand English.

IV.

ABOUT a week after the events above described Sid Smith stood one afternoon in fashionable Lowndes Street, staring at a large house which bore a notice-board to the effect that it was to let, and in Sid Smith's pocket was an order to view the house, which had five storeys and was very fine to the sight. Also in Sid's pocket was a new contract with Sir Joshua for four years at the rate of four hundred pounds a week—instead of three hundred and fifty.

Sid's income was still rising, and, of course, his prestige was rising too. He was rich, and he was steadily getting richer. His wife, a stout lady of bourgeois tastes, had had the idea of moving from Clapham to the West-end; the idea pleased Sid. He had looked about, and the particulars of the house in Lowndes Street had taken his fancy. Nay, more, they had intoxicated him; so much so that he had more than once mentioned the enterprise, and at least once shown the particulars of the house, to

admiring acquaintances and fellow-performers within the Victoria Empire and elsewhere; and on the previous evening he had told Sir Joshua himself and one of the young men in his sketch that the following afternoon was to be consecrated to an inspection of the property, which was variously set forth in the particulars as a "noble mansion," a "town house," and "a gentleman's residence."

AND now at last, having crossed the street, he was on the threshold. Being an artist by temperament, his imagination moved very quickly and grandiosely, and already the house was his and a powerful and luxurious motor-car stood throbbing at the kerb and he was coming down the front steps with his dresser behind him and a respectful chauffeur holding open the door of the car, and a few watchers saying to themselves, "Here's the great Sid Smith going out to do his night's work." The front steps were of marble, broad and massive. He looked up and saw storey lifting above storey into the skies. He contrasted this magnificent abode with his mother's grubby little house in Slip Street, Salford, where he was born, and, justifiably proud, he decided that the world was good and life worth living, and that virtue and industry and genius were much less than their own reward.

Withal he felt a little nervous, for he knew that a viscount lived next door. He thought it was queer that he, the great Sid Smith, the idol of populations, should feel nervous, but feel nervous he did.

Then he perceived, on a card hung crookedly in the dirty but immense dining-room window, the words "Caretaker Within." He smiled, with pleasant anticipation. He had been interpreting the *rôle* of a caretaker of a large house for many months; but he had never to his knowledge actually seen a caretaker; he knew absolutely nothing about caretakers, never before having inspected a house important enough to need the services of a caretaker. He had created his character of a caretaker entirely out of his own head, basing it upon his notions of what a caretaker ought to be like; and nobody had ever questioned the substantial truth of his ideal portrait. It would certainly be very interesting, amusing, and just possibly helpful to see what a real caretaker was in fact like. He rang the bell; after a considerable interval he rang again; the majestic front-door opened to his summons.

"Are you the caretaker?" asked Sid.

"Yes."

It was an old man with whitish hair, a very wrinkled face, and small watery eyes; thin grey hands; somewhat baggy and shabby and indistinct as to clothes; a blue kerchief round his neck and a red one sticking out of his pocket. He spoke without the formula of respect usually offered to prospective tenants of important town mansions, but there was benevolence in his full tone; also he spoke contemplatively, as though answering not Sid Smith but informing the whole universe.

"Got your order to view?" he added. He took the card from Sid and, without glancing at it, transferred it to his own pocket. "We have to be very particular," said he.

Being rather pleased with the old fellow, Sid Smith nodded amiably, if nonchalantly, sure of his power to impress and reassure real caretakers as he had a glimpse of himself in a large mirror on the wall of the vast entrance-hall. What signs of prosperity in that slightly portly figure! The pearl tie-pin alone. The vastness of the parqueted hall, however, was as much as he could stand up against; it was far larger than any room in his house at Clapham! The mouldings on the panels of the various visible doors were gilded. The staircase was terrific!

"You know what happened to the man who was too particular?" observed Sid Smith, quizzically.

"I know what happened to the man as wasn't," the caretaker replied. "Three doors away. Burglars came with a lorry and took off all the marble mantelpieces in the place! And the individual as came first to look round was wearing a pin on his chest with a pearl as big as a gooseberry. That's how they does it. But not me they couldn't do it on! Not me!"

Sid Smith felt a little uncomfortable, and the emptiness of the town residence gave him an uneasy sensation.

"Now this is the dining-room." Opening the door to the right, the caretaker began to reel off the beauties of the house in the style of a museum guide. Then he suddenly stopped, while yet enumerating the advantages of the dining-room, and he looked Sid Smith up and down.

"Excuse me, but aren't you the great Sid Smith?"

"I am," Sid admitted, not deprecating the word "great."

"I thought you was. I thought you was. It struck me all of a heap." From his pocket he pulled the order to view, already a seriously damaged piece of cardboard, and examined it. "Yes, that's right. You're Sid Smith right enough. I thought you was. I said to myself as I was speaking. I said: 'Either that's Sid Smith or it's the devil.'"

"Are you the caretaker?" asked Sid.
"Yes. Got your order to view? We have to be very particular."

"Might be both," said Sid, brightly.

"Excuse me, sir, but I should like to shake your hand. No offence."

A weak grasp; and as the caretaker waggled Sid's hand he looked up naively into Sid's face. Sid was highly pleased by this encounter with one of his million admirers; it seemed to certify his position in the world, and he was glad that by so simple an act he could give such keen pleasure to a common mortal.

"Well, that's done," muttered the caretaker, casually, and dropped Sid's hand as though he was letting something fall on the floor.

Sid began to think that he might have something to learn about real caretakers; they appeared to be more subtle and more mysterious than he had supposed.

BUT it was on the first floor, in the huge imposing double drawing-room, that the caretaker revealed himself fully as a true character. Sid Smith had never seen such a spacious apartment in a private house. He tried to imagine himself giving a Sunday night party in it; and he could not, or hardly. He feared that he would feel a self-conscious fool in it, and he was quite sure that his stolid wife would.

"Aye!" said the real caretaker. "Well may yer look scared!"

"Scared! What do you mean, my good man?"

"Scared!" the caretaker repeated, grimly now. "Of course I know as you music-hall swells make pots o' money. But what I say is—what d'ye do with it? Do you save it? No! I've had my eye on you swells for many a year, and when yer retire from the grease-paint and footlights, how many of ye is there as don't have to have a benefit to keep 'em out of the workhouse? Only one as I can remember, and I've had my eye on yer. Only one. What does a man like you want with a house like this? This house takes some keeping up, this house does. Lease seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, and in three years *you* might be flat on yer beam-ends. Supposing yer had a stroke!"

The great Sid Smith might have been flabbergasted had he been less great than he in fact was. He remained calm and massive.

"My friend," said he, pushing his hat to the back of his head, "do you make any charge for these sermons?"

"A silver collection at the door," the real caretaker replied.

("Not a bad line, that!" Mr. Sid Smith reflected, wondering how he could best bring it into his sketch. "Not at all a bad line.")

"And should *you* know how to slang a butler?" the real caretaker continued. "Why, a gent of your sort wouldn't dare to wipe his nose in front of a butler. You take my advice, Mr. Smith, and don't take this here house, nor no house round about here. Bloomsbury's more in your line. But Lowndes Street—I don't think!"

"You come out of an asylum, my man?" asked Sid Smith, assuming that he had to do with a lunatic.

"Not lately," said the caretaker. "But *you* ought to be in one if you're set on this house. If you're only wasting my time, that's all right. I've got lots of time. I've got all the time there is in the world. Like to see the second floor?"

Sid Smith did not lack courage nor physical strength, and he was twenty years younger than the caretaker; so he bravely asserted that he would see the second floor. He saw the second, third, and fourth floors, and then saw them all again in the reverse order. Back in the echoing hall once more, the caretaker, who had been silent down eighty-nine stairs, remarked:—

"Of course, yer'd have to put house telephones in on every floor. Never keep modern skivvies with all them floors unless ye have telephones to save 'em a-running up and a-running down. See what I mean?"

"Yes, I see," Sid agreed, blandly. "What I don't see is how you keep your job as a caretaker."

"Oh, well," said the caretaker, "don't you go and let worrying about that spoil yer show to-night, Mr. Smith."

"And the basement?" Sid suggested.

"Eh, I'm not forgetting the basement. You come down along o' me and mind the steps. They're dark, and they're hard on yer spine if yer slip."

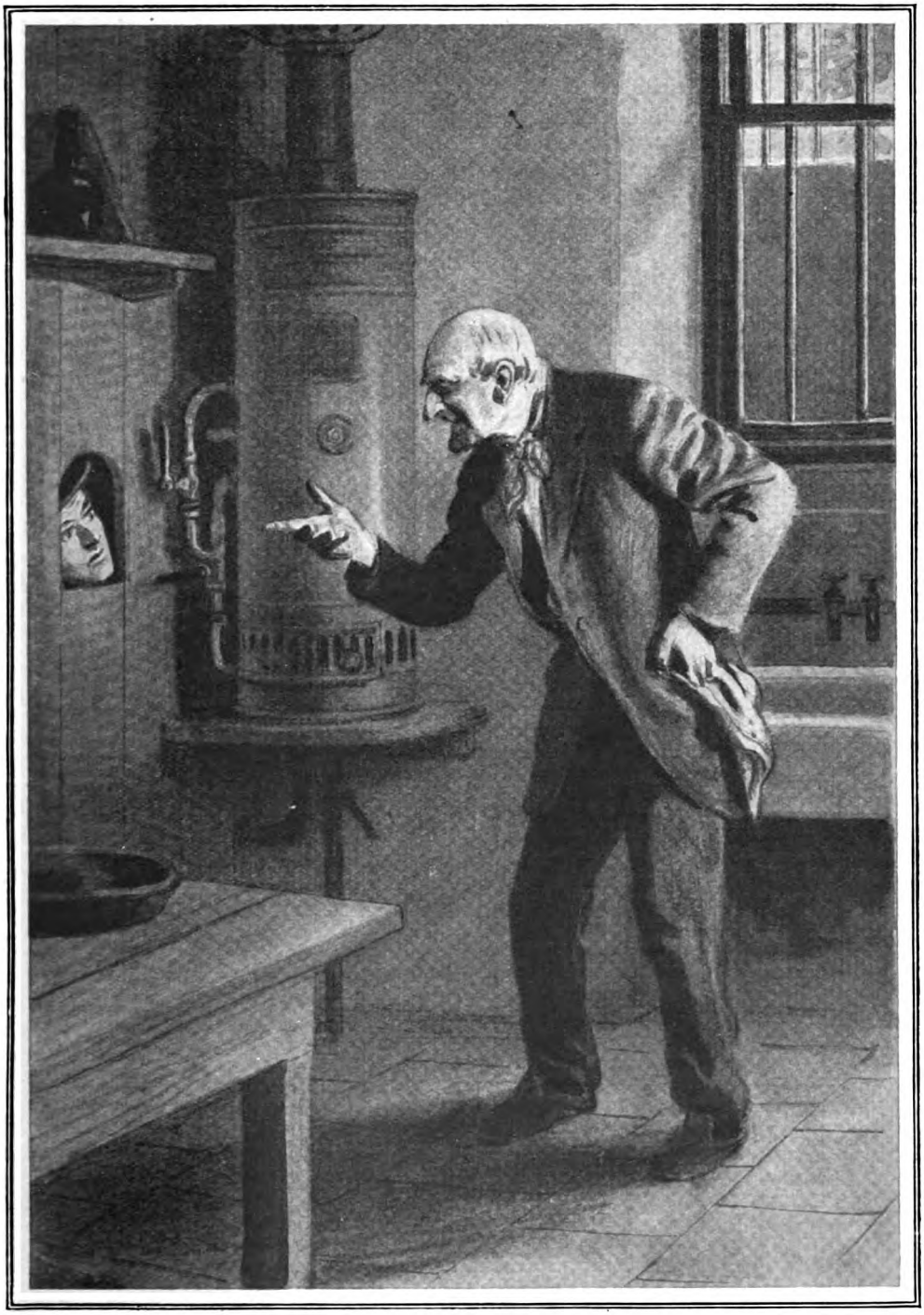
The basement seemed endless to Sid Smith, and full of marvels. The wine-cellar! The strong-room for plate! The butler's pantry! The butler's bedroom!

"And there's something here," said the caretaker, "as yer wouldn't find in another house in Lowndes Street, and that's a servants' bathroom. When yer ring for yer butler and he doesn't come, ye'll know he's having his bath with verbena bath-salts."

The servants' bathroom was a daylightless cubicle beyond the scullery. The geyser was in the scullery, and in the dividing wall was a little hole with a shutter like a theatre gallery ticket-office, through which the occupant of the bathroom, by means of his bare arm, could manipulate the geyser in the scullery: an ingenious arrangement.

"A bit dark here," said Sid Smith in the bathroom.

"Yes, and it'll get darker soon," said the



"So you're the man as libels and slanders us caretakers!" He grinned fiercely at Sid.

caretaker, slamming the door and locking it from the outside.

"Here!" cried Sid Smith, who was a prisoner.

"Here and there!" retorted the caretaker, and his face showed itself to Sid on the scullery side of the little aperture. "So you're the man as libels and slanders us caretakers!" He grinned fiercely at Sid. "I've seen yer sketch all right. I know all about it. We pinch things, we caretakers, do us? We bully young women, do us? We blackmail people, do us? We accept of bribes, do us? We lock people up in rooms, do us, and take money to let 'em out again, do us? All that's in your sketch. Here, caretaking's my trade, and as honest as many and more honest than most; and yer make yer blooming living by holding us up to shame and scorn twice every night. What d'yer think ye are? A man? Yes, and speaking of locking people up in rooms, well, us *do* lock people up in rooms—bathrooms as it happens. And so now ye know it!"

The real caretaker walked deliberately away, and Sid could hear his heavy, slow footsteps resounding through the kitchen and the passages.

"Here!" cried Sid again.

No answer. Not a sound!

An impossible situation! The victim of it was obliged to admit that in his sketch he had drawn a much truer character of a caretaker than he suspected. In fact, the reality surpassed his wildest notions of it.

He struck a match and peered at his watch. In half an hour he would be due at the Victoria Empire. At this point he lost his head and began to thump and kick. But in and out of his resentful fury ran the tiny thought that there might be some justice in the caretaker's complaint. He *had* traduced the great race of caretakers! And herein was the explanation of the queer, dangerous old man's supposed madness.

V.

HOWEVER, therein was not the explanation of the queer, dangerous old man's supposed madness. For after what seemed to be an interminable interval, during which Sid had burnt his last match in consulting his watch, and was obliged to hold it at arm's length through the aperture to take advantage of the scullery light, the caretaker returned, and, having snatched the watch and chain out of Sid's startled hand, uttered these memorable words:—

"And there's one more thing, mister. You've insulted my granddaughter."

"Insulted your granddaughter! I've never set eyes on her."

"Yes, you have. A nice remark to pass to a respectable young woman—telling her that getting her lines out of her 's like drawing teeth out of a cow! And on top o' that yer give her notice!"

Sid Smith caught his breath as a blinding illumination came upon him.

"Are—are—are you the great Macdoodle?"

For answer the caretaker (who was not a real caretaker after all) pulled off a wig.

"Here. Take your watch, Mr. Smith," said he, in a new, dignified voice, ceasing to act.

"This is a have!" exclaimed Sid.

"You may call it that."

"I shall put the law on you—shutting me up like this!"

"If I were you, I shouldn't, Mr. Smith. Because if you do it will all come out what I did it for, and everybody'll know that you bully young women, and what sort of language you use to them. You wouldn't care for that. And here is my granddaughter come to see why you're staying here so late. It seems you told pretty well everybody where you were going to-day!"

Nella Nora had followed her ancestor into the scullery. She positively exuded pertness.

"Do let him out, grandad!" she laughed. "He'll be late."

"Well, I will, to please you, my dear, and so that the public sha'n't be disappointed. It's the public I always think of first. But he must apologize. See how nice and kind and forgiving she is!" he added to Sid Smith. "And you'll withdraw the notice you gave her, won't you? I'm sure you will."

Behind Nella there appeared a very fat, slatternly woman, the real caretaker this time. The old comedian gave her a ten-shilling note. And Sid Smith, having been set free, gave her another ten-shilling note. And then Sid Smith burst into laughter, long and free.

"May I ask what you are laughing at, Mr. Smith?"

"Myself," replied Sid Smith, when he had recovered his composure. "And may I add one thing? You *are* the great Macdoodle—you've proved it."

They shook hands. Sid took Nella Nora swiftly off in a taxi to the Victoria Empire.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ONE-EYED MOOR

ANOTHER "Q. Q." STORY

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

"I TAKE it you don't mind risking your life when necessary, Mr. Creighton?" said Mr. Quayne, turning to me with his sardonic smile.

"My war-time counter-espionage work took me into some pretty tight corners, sir," I replied, smiling back at him. After all, I had not joined the Q. Q. Agency to fill up sheets of foolscap—and I confess I felt a thrill of gratification at the thought that Mr. Quayne was perhaps going to entrust me with a real job.

"Good. Then get yourself a passport this afternoon—we'll give you a note that will speed things up—take the night-boat to Paris, catch the Sud-Express to-morrow morning, and get through to Tangier as soon as you can. At Tangier you will find a man called Davies. Put yourself under his orders. And take care of yourself. Your predecessor—Harwood, a good chap—has just been found with a knife-thrust through his back."

I ignored the unpleasantly sticky end of my predecessor with a fine nonchalance I hoped was not lost on my employer.

"And how shall I find Davies, sir?"

Mr. Quayne smiled at me.

"I think you can trust him to find you," he said. "We'll cable him that you are arriving to replace Harwood."

ABOUT noon four days later, from the deck of the horrible, rolling little Spanish steamer from Algeciras (it was unfortunately not the day for the Bland Line boat from Gibraltar) I gazed across the tumbling green-blue sea to the white, flat-roofed houses of Tangier, rising in terraces to the picturesque fortifications of its citadel.

Within an hour I was seated at an overdue lunch in the cool-shadowed dining-room of the hotel overlooking the water-front. It was not quite my first experience of Islamic lands—during the war my counter-espionage work had taken me to Egypt and Palestine—but this sudden plunge from European Algeciras into the Arabian-Night atmosphere of Tangier set me tingling with a thrill of romantic anticipation. What awaited me here? I had no idea. My only instructions were to put myself under the orders of "a man called Davies"—and Davies would get in touch with me himself. It was therefore useless, and probably impolitic, to inquire after him from the hotel people.

The majority of the visitors to the hotel had already finished their lunch. Apart from the new arrivals, only one couple, a man and woman, remained in the dining-room, sitting with smoke-curling cigarettes over their coffee. They were sufficiently distinctive to evoke a second glance of interest. The man, youthfully middle-aged and decidedly handsome, with a shock of grey hair and a little grey goatee beard, had a touch of aristocracy about him that was not entirely due to the monocle screwed into his left eye. Arrestingly intelligent to the most casual glance, there was something

Copyright, 1924, by F. Britten Austin.

indefinable in his aspect that suggested the artist. Indefinably also, I had a sudden sense that somewhere and some time or other I had seen him before. But, try as I would, the exact memory of it—if indeed it was a memory and not a vague false resemblance to some chance acquaintance—eluded me.

His companion was a perfection of cream-complexioned, red-lipped, black-haired, languorous-eyed Spanish beauty. Those eyes were fixed on him, absorbed, as they talked, and her shoulders moved in the hint of a lithe sinuosity as though she craved instinctively to rub herself against him in a feline caress. A honeymoon couple? If ever a woman was in love, that woman was. He smiled at her, with eyes—it seemed to me—a little too fascinating for complete confidence in them.

However, I had not come to Tangier to study honeymoon couples, and, in the interval until Davies should seek me out, I thought I could not do better than make some acquaintance with the town. Accordingly, having finished my lunch, I decided to go for a walk. As I passed through the foyer of the hotel a sudden impulse sent me to the French lady in the reception bureau to ask, on the pretext of a doubtful recognition, the name of the couple still in the dining-room.

"A Dutch artist—M. van Ryn—and his wife, monsieur," was the answer. "He is staying here some time, painting pictures of Tangier."

"Merci, madame," I said. "Then I have been mistaken. I do not know M. van Ryn."

I certainly did not know any M. van Ryn, but as I walked up the steep, narrow, cobble-paved street, dominated by the green-tiled minaret of the mosque brilliant against the blue sky, I could not get him out of my mind. Where had I seen him before?

I REACHED that slightly wider space called the Soko Chico, or "little market," and, fatigued by the furnace-like heat, I dropped into one of the outside chairs of a little *café* on the corner. Time enough to explore Tangier when the sun should have gone down a little. I sat there over a cup of coffee, watching the motley mob swirl around me as the ass-drivers forced a passage through it with their incessant cries of "Balek! Balek!" and pestered by an unending succession of gesticulating venders of carpets and long guns, alternating with a gruesome parade of those loathsome mendicants, mutely exhibiting their deformities, which only the East can produce.

Obstinately though I refused to see those beggars, one of them—a tall, bearded fellow in a tattered blue burnous, a dirty red fez upon his head—somehow managed to make me look up at his swarthy face. And as I glanced at him I saw his finger-nail flick something on to my table. He drifted on, pathetically, to the next potential almsgiver, and with a mild curiosity I looked to see what he had thrown to me. It was a tiny pellet of paper. As I picked it up he glanced round at me, a glint of meaning swiftly transitory in his eyes. I unfolded the paper. It was a message—two words—"Follow,—Davies."

My adventure was beginning! Throwing down a peseta in payment for my coffee I plunged once more into the throng, keeping that dirty red fez just in sight as it moved slowly in front of me. I followed him, discreetly—since the hint at prudence was obvious—keeping my distance from him. He threaded a bewildering labyrinth of deserted passage-ways, then suddenly turned into a doorway, disappeared. Arriving at that doorway myself, I found myself at the foot of a steep, narrow staircase coming sheer to the street, the treads of the stairs—scarcely broad enough for the foot—covered with arabesque-decorated tiles. My guide had evidently ascended those stairs. There was nothing for it but to follow. I did so, found myself in a shaded room whose furniture was limited to a coffee-stool and a tattered divan. That squalid beggar stood in the middle of it, awaiting me. To my astonishment, he held out his hand.

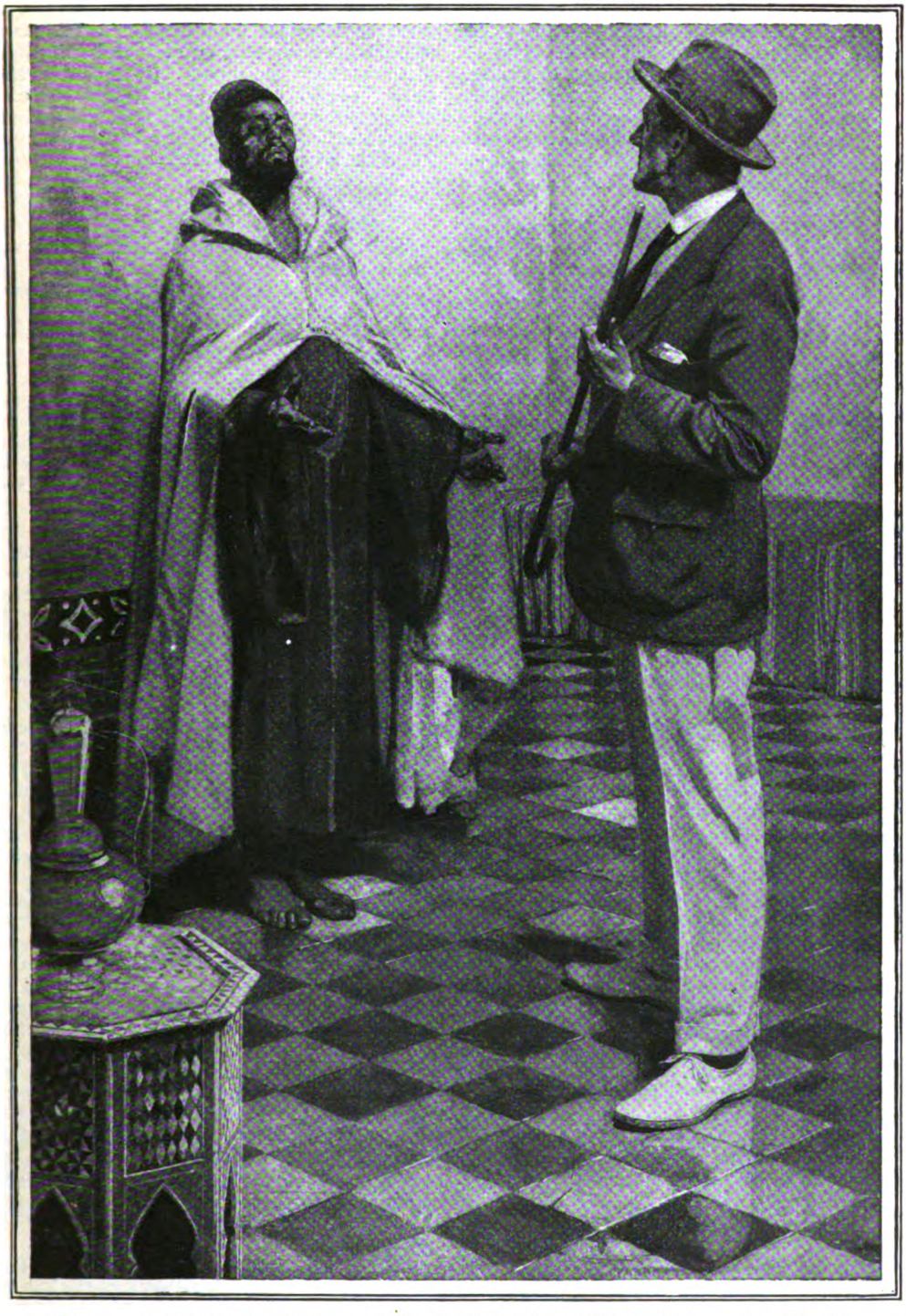
"Creighton?" he said, in perfect English. "I'm Davies."

A few minutes later, having shared my pouch of English tobacco with him, we were seated side by side on the divan—and he was giving me the outlines of the business which had brought me to Tangier.

"There's trouble—big trouble," he said, "blowing up in French Morocco. You've heard of the Jehad, I suppose—the Holy War against the Infidel? There are always mutterings of it in Islam, whether in Morocco or elsewhere. It always fails to come off—not because these charming people are averse to an orgy of throat-slitting, quite the contrary—but because none of them has ever brains and grit enough to organize the thing properly and carry it through. They've never had a leader who can match himself against the European. But this time—unless all the indications are at fault—they've got a leader—something quite out of the ordinary." He puffed at his pipe reflectively for a moment.

"Who is this leader?" I asked.

"I can tell you his name—and not much more about him," he replied. "He is called Sidi Mohammed Idrees—a 'saint,' of course—no one could hope to lead a Jehad unless he were one of the fanatical hereditary



To my astonishment, he held out his hand. "Creighton?" he said, in perfect English. "I'm Davies."

' saints ' that swarm here in Morocco. And it is said that he has only one eye. But no European has ever seen him—to recognize him. On the other hand, there is news enough about him—fragmentary, of course, for no good Moslem would betray him. He seems to be ubiquitous. From every corner of Morocco have come whispers about him—haranguing the natives, working them up to frenzy, and then bidding them bide their time for the day is at hand—and *organizing*. That's where he's dangerous. The man can organize. There's proof enough of that. Almost every chieftain in Morocco is in the plot."

" And we're going into French Morocco to find him ? "

" No. The French look after their own territory. But Tangier here is under an international *régime*, which makes it the happy hunting-ground of every political intriguer—the main business of the French and Spanish authorities is to thwart each other's activities. And somewhere or other in this city our friend Sidi Mohammed Idrees is hidden while he completes his preparations. So the French have very wisely put the job on to us—the Q. Q. Agency. And I wish old Q. Q. himself were here. It's a job big enough for him."

" And what am I to do ? " I asked.

" Well, this little bust-up isn't going to be worked without munitions, and we have more than a suspicion that a gentleman staying at your hotel is handling that side of the business. That's where you come in. I want you to watch him like a cat watches a mouse—and take care of yourself. You heard what happened to Harwood, I suppose ? I found him lying dead outside my door. I've changed my address since then. But you had better not come here again. Give any messages to the waiter, Henri—he's a French secret service man—in the *café* where I found you."

" And this man in my hotel ? " I queried. " What does he call himself ? "

" He calls himself van Ryn, and gives himself out as a Dutch artist. If you can find out who he really is, we should be glad."

" I've seen him in the hotel," I said. " And I feel sure I've met him before somewhere—but where, I can't imagine."

" Well, he's dangerous. You'll need all your wits to deal with him. Do you speak Arabic, by the way ? "

" A little—I picked some up when I was on secret service in Egypt and Palestine during the war," I said.

" It isn't quite the same as they speak here, but you'll find it useful. I'm pretty good at it myself—in fact, I pass here as an Arab from Algiers. Old Q. Q.'s the man—he can get himself up like a true-born Moor and rattle away Moghreb to them like a native. I believe he did a Richard Burton stunt to the sacred city of Mulai Idrees at Tarhon many years ago. If so, he's the only foreigner who ever got there. Your strong suit is German, isn't it ? " he added, with a smile. " The office cabled me a sort of dossier about you, you know."

" A second language," I admitted. " I went to school in Germany."

He nodded.

" You may find it useful in this business," he remarked.

" Why ? " I said, in surprise. " You don't mean to suggest—— ? "

" I suggest nothing. But if France were suddenly confronted by a Moroccan version of our Indian Mutiny, it is fairly obvious who would benefit most. However, that's not our concern. We've got to find this one-eyed ' saint,' Sidi Mohammed Idrees, and abduct him if necessary—at any rate, silence him. And I'm pretty sure that Mr. van Ryn knows something about him. So do your best."

THE fierce heat of the afternoon had abated somewhat when, an hour or so later, I picked my way back through that labyrinth of narrow streets to the Little Soko. A little beyond it, as I went down to the picturesque old Portuguese gateway that framed a glimpse of the sea, I had a curious experience. The motor-coach from Tetuan had stopped at the foot of the road to the hotel, and two ladies were descending. The first was a portly old dame, voluminously wrapped in veils and tussore dust-coat, who hobbled—half-crippled—with the aid of an ebony walking-stick. The second, her companion, half turned her exceedingly good-looking young face to me as she climbed out—and I thought my heart was going to stop in the sudden shock. Surely that was Veronica—Miss Satterthwaite ! The next moment the illusion was dispelled. The young woman threw back her dust-veil, and I could see that her hair was the rich blonde of ripening corn. Miss Satterthwaite's hair, of course, was dark almost to blackness—and besides, this young woman was laughing and chattering with a vivacity that was utterly at variance with Miss Satterthwaite's inscrutable calm.

" Come along, momma ! " she laughed, joyously, her accent distinctly American. " Isn't this just gorgeous ? I do hope it's a good hotel ! "

Of course it was not Miss Satterthwaite ! Quite apart from the difference in the colour of her hair, and her totally dissimilar manner, how could it have been ? I myself had only just arrived, having come by the

quickest route—and I had left Miss Satterthwaite in the Piccadilly Circus office. How could a woman arriving from Tetuan possibly be she? It was absurd—absurd any way I thought of it. Yet that chance-caught resemblance disturbed me not a little as I followed them into the hotel. I had to make an effort of my will to shut my thoughts off from that dark, inscrutable girl in London. Mr. Quentin Quayne had not engaged me to make love to his *employées*. And the blank improbability of such intimacy—the cold indifference, the utter absence of all emotion, in that beautiful face came up sharply before me—made me jeer in bitter sarcasm at myself.

I TURNED into the Orientally-furnished lounge, and there, sitting alone over a newspaper, was Mr. van Ryn. And suddenly, in that first glance at him, memory flooded up in me—name, circumstance, and place! The place, a certain room in London whence, during the war, detected spies not a few walked out to death on the morrow. The name, von Stürpp. The circumstance, an interrogation where I was but one of several onlookers. There had not been enough evidence to send that arrogant German to a firing-party, but ample to send him behind the barbed-wire of an internment camp.

An idea flashed into my mind, startling me with its spontaneous audacity. In my pocket was a gold watch, and inside the case of that watch was an engraved number—a number that, shown by one German spy to another, would be instantly identified. That watch was a souvenir presented to me by a condemned German agent who was grateful for certain little courtesies.

I walked up to the man, asked him politely in French if he could tell me the exact time. As I did so, I took the watch from my pocket, jerked the case open, held it so that he could see the number. An expression of astonishment flitted across his face. His own watch was already in his hand for answer to my question. He sprang the case open, showed a number identical with my own.

"*Wohl begegnet!*" I smiled at him.

"*Sie heissen?*" he queried, not yet recovered from his surprise and instinctively, I could see, suspicious. I could feel that he regretted his own almost automatic act in showing me the number on his watch.

"Schwarz." I named myself at random, sitting down on the divan beside him as I spoke.

He frowned at me, his fingers playing with the monocle in his left eye.

"I thought you were English," he said in German, dropping his voice to a cautious undertone.

"I went to school in England," I replied, in the same manner. "My English appearance has been useful more than once." I smiled at him knowingly.

"What are you doing here?" There was authority in his subdued tone.

"You know Kaulbach?" I said, using at random the name of an important member of the war-time German secret bureau. I had never met the man, but I had heard his name often enough.

"*Ja—jawohl.*" He stared at me.

"Do you know where he is now?"

"I should be glad to hear," he replied. I found myself fascinated by the glassy glare of the eye behind the monocle. I pulled myself together.

"He is in Madrid," I invented, boldly. "I am working for him. He represents a big seller of war-time machine-guns." I met his eyes with significance in my own. "I have come here to do a little business."

He stared at me again for a moment.

"How many have you to sell?"

"Two thousand at once—as many more as you want later."

"Delivered?"

"Where you wish, Herr von Stürpp." It was a bold shot. I saw the sharp flicker in his eyes. He paused for a moment's thought.

"I should want documentary proof of your capacity to deliver before we discuss this further," he said, his face serious, his fingers playing with his little grey goatee beard.

"I have none with me. I'm only an advance agent, but I will send to Madrid for all the proof you wish," I replied. Where was this glib mendacity going to lead me?

"Then we will talk when you can produce it," he said, curtly, getting up from the divan. "In the meantime——" He made a cabalistic sign with his fingers that I utterly failed to understand or to respond to, and walked out of the room.

I sat considerably perplexed. On the one hand, I had established the fact that the Dutch artist van Ryn was really the German spy von Stürpp, and that he was prepared to negotiate with gun-runners. On the other hand, had I given myself away by my failure to answer his evident code signal? What did that signal mean, anyway?

I went up to my room, wrote out a report of these circumstances, strolled down to the *café* in the Little Soko, and slipped my message into the ready hand of Henri, the waiter. My intermediary was prepared for

me, gave me a little sign of understanding as he came to take my order.

Then I went back to the hotel and dinner.

That evening, under a full moon, I sat and smoked a pipe of reflection on the terrace overlooking the bay and a corner of the town. Very romantic, my fair American volubly proclaimed it to be as she came out of the hotel with her mother (I had looked them up in the visitors' book—Mrs. Merrilees and Miss Olga Merrilees). They went to the parapet of the terrace and looked over. Presently the old lady, alleging letters to write, hobbled indoors. Miss Merrilees remained, leaning over the parapet in dreamy contemplation of this dreamlike Oriental city. Once more, as I caught a glimpse of her profile, I could have sworn it was Miss Satterthwaite. I wondered if, by some curious chance, she were some American blood-relation, since it was physically impossible that it could be Miss Satterthwaite herself.

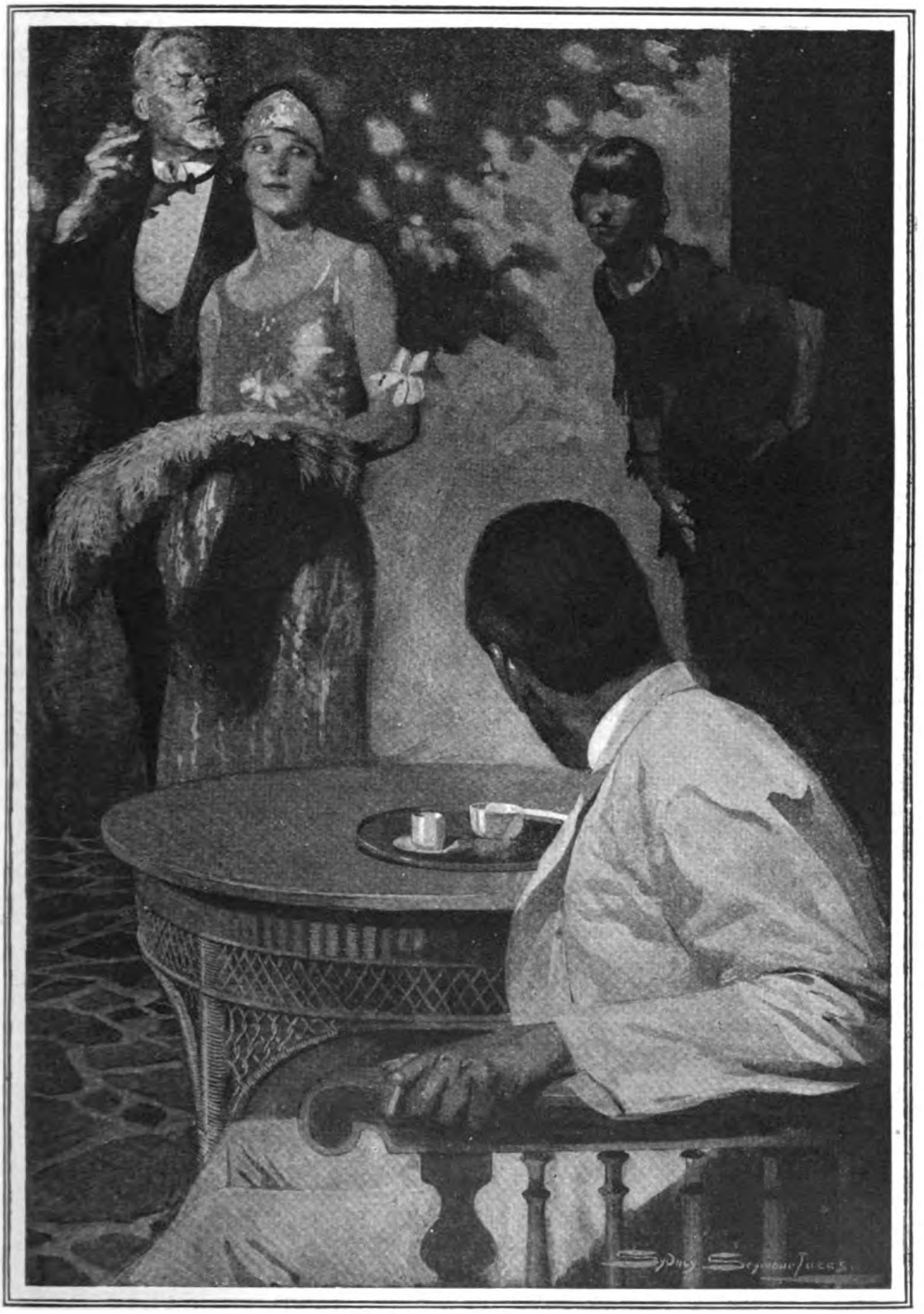
Then I saw my monocled friend, elegant in a dinner-jacket, strolling across to her. His wife was not with him. Miss Merrilees turned to him and, with the innocent unconventionality of an American girl, asked him the name of a building that gleamed bright in the moonlight against the night sky. He told her, and in a few minutes they were conversing in a rapidly knit intimacy. I heard her laugh ring out repeatedly in frank amusement. My enigmatic friend was evidently making himself interesting—and fascinating, to judge from the way she looked at him. It gave me an unpleasant feeling. Such a man as von Stürpp—professionally a past-master in all the arts of fascination—was a dangerous acquaintance for a naively innocent and attractive girl such as Miss Merrilees so obviously was. Should I make an opportunity to warn her against him? I reassured myself with the probability that she would be gone in a day or two, before any damage could be done. And then, as my glance strayed round towards the hotel, I saw the Spanish woman standing in a shadow, watching—watching. The expression on her face, lit by the moonlight as she peered it forward, gave me a shock. I saw her right hand slide stealthily down to her knee, as though feeling for something—and then this incipient little drama was abruptly broken by Miss Merrilees bidding her new friend a smiling "Good night" and walking back into the hotel. Instantly the Spanish woman had vanished in the shadow.

THE ensuing days were—so far as my professional activities were concerned—a record of exasperating blankness. As unobtrusively as I could I kept a sharp eye upon von Stürpp—he did not speak to me again, and passed me always as though we had never exchanged a word—and I waited, with growing irritation, for the forged documents *re* machine-guns which Davies had promised that our Madrid office should procure for me.

Davies himself I had spoken to only twice in the whole week, and then in different houses of that rabbit-warren of tiny streets whither an emissary of his, presenting himself to me suddenly on my walks, had led me. He communicated with me, as I with him, by regular notes through the intermediary of the French waiter in the *café*, and what he told me filled me with uneasiness. We were as far as ever from getting the slightest clue to the whereabouts of that dangerous one-eyed Moorish "saint," Sidi Mohammed Idrees, but, according to Davies, sheikh after sheikh, carefully disguised, was arriving from the wild hinterland and hiding himself in the city. The plot was evidently coming to a head. How Davies (always in Arab disguise himself) obtained his information, I did not know. I had a humiliating feeling that I was useless and superfluous in a swarm of active agents at his command—a fifth wheel to the coach.

As to von Stürpp, or van Ryn as he called himself, he did absolutely nothing in any way suspicious, so far as I could see. True to his *rôle* of artist, he spent his time sketching about the city—I found him placidly seated on a camp-stool before his canvas time after time as I wandered round and round the labyrinth of narrow streets, not having moved since the previous hour or half-hour (I kept coming innocently upon him at irregular intervals) when I had last seen him. And what exasperated me most was that Miss Merrilees was nearly always with him, sketching also—she and her mother were apparently making a long stay in Tangier. Their intimacy was obviously making rapid progress, blindly innocent though it certainly was on her side. I could see that the man fascinated her. On his side, he angled for her company—I overheard him more than once suggesting a picturesque spot to sketch on the morrow, and promising to conduct her to it. As for Mrs. Merrilees, fat and contented, she sat, with some absurd knitting in her hand, under a sun-umbrella on the terrace of the hotel during that part of the day when she was not invisible in her room. There also sat, gloomily brooding, an unread paper-back novel in her lap, Herr von Stürpp's beautiful Spanish wife.

I judged it best to attempt no conversation with the Señora, but one day I ventured



As my glance strayed round, I saw the Spanish woman standing in a shadow, watching—watching.

—when we happened to be alone on the terrace—to whisper a remonstrance to old Mrs. Merrilees. She was a nasty-looking, coarse-featured old woman, her eyes hidden in blue spectacles, her face plastered with purplish white powder. She merely snapped at me.

" I guess Olga is sure-enough able to look after herself," she said, in a harsh, unfeminine voice and a raucous Middle-West accent. " She tells me that Dutch artist-gentleman is giving her lessons in painting that beat her home art-school out of sight. I think she's a lucky girl to find someone that'll take that trouble over her."

I jerked up my shoulders in despair and renounced the topic. As for Miss Merrilees herself, I never got a chance to speak to her. She was never out of the company of that handsome, elegantly-monocled scoundrel who smiled on her so fascinatingly; she even made a third when von Stürpp sat with his wife on the terrace, and tried to speak to her in stumbling phrase-book Spanish, innocently obtuse to that lady's fierce glare and obstinate silence.

It was an interesting little comedy which infuriated me—and which, in the utter absence of any useful work on the job which had brought me to Tangier, filled my thoughts almost to obsession. As a secret agent I was a conspicuous failure. My unfortunate predecessor, Mr. Harwood, must have been far more dangerous to *someone* —I wondered what he had discovered and was going to tell Davies when he got that knife-thrust in his back—but I was left contemptuously alone. No one molested me. No one took the slightest notice of me as I wandered, in exasperated boredom, up and down every one of the little streets of Tangier. Von Stürpp himself ignored my very existence. He would blankly look right through me, as though I were no more actual than a ghost. And all the time Davies's messages told me that the plot, the plot to which I could get no clue, was thickening fast. *Something* was going to happen in Tangier very soon—and on that *something* depended the lives of thousands of men and women in the distant interior, depended perhaps once more a terrible war in Europe. If French Morocco should rise in revolt, then very soon once more the guns would be crashing death on the Franco-German frontier. If only " Q. Q." were here himself! I longed for Mr. Quentin Quayne as Wellington longed for Blücher. This was a mystery that imperatively demanded all the power of his uncanny genius. Compared with him, even the efficient Davies was a child, and confessed it.

AND then so startling a thing happened that even in my reminiscence of it I find myself disturbed in a ghost-memory of the astonishment, the shattering emotion, the upheaval of my whole being that came with the event itself. I had gone to bed, after a dinner and an evening spent with Davies in one of his hiding-places in this city of hiding-places, when there came a tap at my door. I jumped out of my sleep and opened it.

To my surprise, it was old Mrs. Merrilees who stood on the threshold. My surprise leaped up the scale when she spoke—not in Middle-West American, but in good British English and in a voice I recognized.

" Can I come in a moment, Mr. Creighton ? " said—*Q. Q. himself!*

I stared at him in speechless amazement as, grotesque in his woman's clothes now that he stood erect, he entered the room and closed the door carefully behind him.

" But," I stammered, when I had found my voice, " by what magic did you arrive here from Tetuan on the same day as I from London ? "

He smiled at me as he seated himself on my bed.

" There are such things as aeroplanes, Mr. Creighton," he replied. " Important information came into the office after you had left. Veronica and I were at Tetuan while you were still in the train from Madrid."

" Veronica! Then it *was* Miss Satterthwaite! " I exclaimed. I looked at him, utterly humiliated. " Mr. Quayne, I'm afraid you've found me a singularly useless secret agent."

" Not at all," he replied. " You fulfilled the purpose for which I sent you here—you identified von Stürpp. That was highly important to us. As for espionage in this place, one must either be a native or look like a native to effect anything. I have kept you here merely in order to have an extra man to call on if the necessity arose." He smiled at me again. " I think the necessity has arisen, Mr. Creighton. Not only has this pretty plot we are investigating come to a head, but Veronica went out sketching at four o'clock with von Stürpp. It is now two a.m.—and she has not returned."

" She has not returned ? " I felt myself turn sick in a sudden awful apprehension. " My God! What has happened to her alone with that scoundrel ? " In the wild anguish of that moment (only then did I fully realize all that Miss Satterthwaite, with whom I had not exchanged one single intimate word, meant to me) I forgot the respect due to my employer. " Surely, Mr. Quayne, a business such as this is utterly unfit to bring a lady on! "

He looked at me with a grimly amused shrewdness.

"I see that Veronica has made another conquest," he said. "Don't worry, Mr. Creighton—Miss Satterthwaite is well able to take care of herself."

I hated him in that moment.

"But surely she can be of no use in this affair!" I cried, tormented with imaginations I dared not contemplate.

"On the contrary," he replied, quietly. "Miss Satterthwaite was an essential factor in my strategy. Von Stürpp holds the key to all this business—of that I was convinced after you had left. He brings with him, on this extremely hazardous adventure, a beautiful lady—denoting a susceptibility to the eternal feminine which, I think you will agree, is a decidedly weak spot in his otherwise formidable character. It is up to us to profit by that weak spot—and I know no one more capable of doing so than Miss Satterthwaite. In fact, by hampering himself with an exceedingly jealous Spanish lady he gave us a double chance. And now we are going to use it. The Señora van Ryn is at the present moment pacing up and down the terrace outside, waiting, in no very amiable frame of mind, for the return of her husband. He will *never* return—of that I am certain. Let us go and apprise the lady of the fact, Mr. Creighton. Just put your clothes on, will you?"

I dressed myself, trembling in every limb, feverish with the most awful anxiety I have ever experienced in my life—Miss Satterthwaite held by that unscrupulous arch-spy in this Oriental city!—and followed my employer downstairs, through the hotel, and out on to the dark terrace.

AS Mr. Quayne had said, the Spanish woman was pacing up and down like a caged tigress. I could hear her muttering to herself.

"You do the talking, Creighton," said Q. Q. "I am still Mrs. Merrilees, remember."

I went up to the woman and addressed her in my best Spanish.

"Señora van Ryn," I said, "you are waiting for your husband?"

She flashed round on me.

"Where is he?" she demanded, so fiercely that I shrank back involuntarily. "Where is the Americana?"

Q. Q. whispered to me.

"They have fled together." I translated the words he prompted. "You will never see them again, Señora."

She uttered the cry of a maddened animal, swung round on the false Mrs. Merrilees, sprang at her like a wild cat. "*Ah!* You helped them!—you helped them!" I jumped to interpose, held her back, while she fiercely gasped out a string of the vituperative epithets with which the Spanish language is so well provided. "You helped her to steal my husband!"

"Tell her that her marriage to him was as false as everything else about him—that he is a German spy, already married to a German—she does not know that, thinks he is the artist he pretended to be. Tell her I want her to help me to get back my daughter," said the hobbling Mrs. Merrilees, feigning a lifelike agitation and distress.

I translated—and I saw a thin glint of steel as the beautiful Spaniard convulsively clutched the shawl that was threatening to slip from her shoulders. I thought she was going to faint. With closed eyes she swayed on her feet, muttered between clenched teeth.

"They shall die! They shall both die!"

"Tell her we want to help her. Ask her if she can give us a hint of where her husband is."

I translated. She opened her eyes at me in so wild a glare that it almost frightened me for her sanity.

"If I knew where he was, do you think I should be waiting here?" she cried—and this time the thin steel of her poniard came out in naked menace under the diamonded dark vault of stars, quivering for a breast in which to plunge itself. "Ah, Dios! Dios! If I knew where he was!"

"Ask her if she will let us search his room. We may find a clue there."

Once more I translated, and—suddenly and terribly calm—she looked round at us.

"You swear vengeance with me?" she said, in a changed voice that drew its breath through tight teeth.

I laid my hand on hers, and swore it—whole-heartedly. We turned to Mr. Quayne, dodderingly feminine in a masterpiece of character-acting.

"And she also swears?"

Mrs. Merrilees also swore, pledged herself in a quavering hand-grip.

The beautiful Spaniard led us through the hotel, up to the suite of apartments—luxurious for Tangier—that Mr. van Ryn had occupied. We searched every nook and corner of those rooms thoroughly—"Mrs. Merrilees" displaying a professional expertness that would have betrayed her masquerade to any but the passion-blinded eyes of the woman who followed us round, clutching that unsheathed poniard, and suggesting to us, in her fierce vindictiveness, one possible hiding-place for documents after another. We found absolutely nothing—not a scrap of paper that threw any light upon the secret business of Herr von Stürpp. Once the Chief grunted with satis-

faction as from a drawer in a dressing-table he took out a monocle and some other small object that I could not see before he slipped both into a pocket of his dress. Otherwise, we drew a complete blank. Herr von Stürpp, wherever he had gone, had been careful to leave behind him no indication either of his business or of his destination.

Cross-questioned, his unfortunate Spanish "wife" could tell us absolutely nothing that was of use to us. She had married him five months previously in Seville. They had come to Tangier for their honeymoon. Frequently he had left her in the hotel while absent for a few days or even a week on sketching expeditions, but always he had told her the exact date of his intended return. Never had he—as now—gone off without a word. And since every peseta of his cash (she knew well where to look for it) had gone with him, the inference that he had gone for good was obvious. Dawn was already breaking when we relinquished our fruitless quest.

"But you will still help me?" challenged the Señora, her dark eyes glowing fiercely upon us. "You will still help me to find him? I will never rest till I meet him again!" And she clenched the dagger, with a vindictive show of the teeth in her white face that gave me a little shudder down my spine.

We promised and left her. Up in my room again, the Chief (still in the incongruous disguise of Mrs. Merrilees) sat thoughtful for a moment or two.

"A part of our strategic scheme has broken down," he said. "I counted on that Spanish woman really knowing something of von Stürpp's affairs. It is obvious that he has kept her completely in the dark. But, of course, it's what might have been expected. Von Stürpp is too old a campaigner to trust any of his secrets to a woman. However," he finished, rising from his chair, "he is only of secondary interest. Our main business is with Sidi Mohammed Idrees. Unless I am much mistaken, he is not only here in Tangier, but at the very crisis of his conspiracy. When we've dealt with him, we'll have another look at our friend von Stürpp."

"And Veronica—Miss Satterthwaite?" I protested. "You surely do not propose to leave her in the hands of that scoundrel?"

He smiled as he shook his head at me.

"Not a minute longer than I can help, Mr. Creighton. But, believe me, Miss Satterthwaite has had some experience in taking care of herself. She will almost certainly find means to let us know where she is—and then I think we shall be on the track of great events." He laid a kindly hand upon my shoulder. "Turn into bed for another hour or two, my boy. You can do nothing now. But you are likely to be busy before you get another chance of sleep." And with that he left me.

I did not even attempt to sleep. I paced up and down my room until I could bear the confinement no longer, and then I went out of the hotel and wandered up and down, in and out, the labyrinthine streets of Tangier, deserted and strangely quiet in this crystal-bright hour after dawn.

THE day that followed was terrible. Whether as himself or as Mrs. Merrilees, Mr. Quayne had totally disappeared from the hotel. I did not dare to make inquiries after him, lest I should accidentally spoil his plans. I could only return, feverishly, every half-hour or so, after a feverish perambulation of the streets, now full again with a swarming, clamorous African humanity, to the hotel in the hope that there might be a message for me. But there was never a word or a sign. The Señora—I would have spoken to her if I had seen her—was likewise invisible. Even Davies was not to be found, though I sent him message after message through the French waiter at the *café*.

I was re-entering the hotel for the twentieth time that day—it was already late afternoon—when a villainous-looking Moor stopped me on the threshold, drew a scrap of paper from his burnous. I took it. At last! It was a message: "Follow bearer.—Davies."

I followed. We threaded a tortuous way through the narrow streets that were now so familiar to me, until at last my conductor plunged down a dark alley where I had never penetrated. He stopped before a horseshoe-arched portal, knocked at a door studded with heavy nails. The door opened. My guide motioned me to enter.

I passed in—and instantly something was thrown over my head. I was flung to the ground, and I felt a firm grip on my wrists and ankles, while a heavy knee crushed in my chest. I choked for breath under the black sack which enveloped me. The next moment I felt my wrists and ankles being tightly lashed with cord, I was hoisted into the air like a bundle, and borne forward—upstairs, it seemed to me, for my bearers (they had not uttered a word) stumbled several times. After a few minutes of this progression I was flung with a crash to the floor, the sack was plucked off my head, and I found myself lying in a room dimly lit by a small barred window. A couple of wild-looking Moors bent over me, bound a suffocating gag over my mouth. Then they went to the door. They shut it after

She sprang at Mrs. Merrilees like a wild cat. I held her back, while she fiercely gasped out: "You helped her to steal my husband!"

them—I noted how thick and heavy it was—and I was left alone.

But not for long. A minute or two later the door opened again and a man entered. It was—elegant—cynically smiling—playing, as he approached me, with the monocle in his left eye—von Stürpp!

"Good afternoon, Mr. Creighton," he said, pleasantly, in perfect English. "I'm afraid you are not very comfortable there?"

I could only glare at him.

"Never mind," he added. "It will not be for long. In a little time you will be released from your earthly sufferings and pass into whatever purgatory it is that teaches clumsy spies to behave more cleverly in their next incarnation." He smiled at me. "It may interest you to know, Mr. Creighton, that you are without exception the clumsiest novice that I have come upon in my experience. For a moment I admit you bluffed me—when you showed me that watch. But you gave yourself away immediately. You told me, for example, that Kaulbach was in Madrid—whereas I—I'm sure it will interest you to hear this—have the honour to own Kaulbach as one of my pseudonyms. And apparently you had never in your life seen the pass-sign by which the initiates know one another." I writhed in my bonds as he continued to smile down upon me. "You were quite harmless, of course—naturally, I had you watched, and I know that you have done absolutely nothing while you have been here. In the ordinary way I should not have bothered you to pay me this little visit—but since you own poor Hatzfeldt's watch, and must have been at least accessory to his death to possess it, I'm afraid you'll have to suffer, by the ancient and inexorable law of retaliation, for the premature decease of one of my best friends." He said all this in a tone of mocking persiflage which made me yearn to be free of my bonds and strike him in the face, but his last sentence sent a chill to my heart. There was no mistaking the vindictive, diabolical cruelty of the man who smiled at me while he played elegantly with his monocle. I was as good as dead. I could only hope that the death would be merciful and swift.

He was about to continue his mockery of my helplessness when a native entered, touched him on the arm, spoke to him in low, rapid sentences that I could not catch. He turned to me again.

"I'm afraid I must leave you for a while, Mr. Creighton," he said. "Some important business summons me. But rest assured that I shall in due course return to attend to you."

I shuddered, impotently, at the sinister mockingly-pleasant smile which accompanied his words; watched him as, with the native, he went out of the room.

I was left lying alone there for what seemed to me to be an eternity, while the light faded from the little barred window and the room gradually lapsed into complete blackness. No one came near me. I could not hear a sound. I might have been already in my grave.

AND then, in that pitch-darkness, I heard something. I listened, with all my faculties at strain. It was—surely!—the door being opened with the minimum of noise, shut again. The next moment the white blaze of an electric torch, flashing into my eyes, dazzled me. I could not see who held it behind the glare. The torch approached, gleamed upward for a moment to a face. It was Miss Satterthwaite! Miss Satterthwaite, quiet, efficient-looking, incredibly normal, nodding at me in cool, unemotional reassurance. Despite my joy at seeing her, I was overwhelmed with humiliation that she, whom I had day-dreamed of rescuing by some act of picturesque gallantry, should instead have been the one to rescue me. For rescuer she was. I saw the flash of a knife—and in an instant or two my bonds dropped from me. I was free.

I stood up, rubbing myself to get the numbness out of my limbs.

"And you?" I whispered. "Are you a prisoner too?"

She had switched off the torch. Her whispered answer came back out of the impenetrable blackness that had swallowed her.

"He thinks I am going to fly with him into the interior to-night. He does not suspect me at all. I am a romantic girl yearning for the Garden of Allah and a sheikh." The little laugh which followed the words hurt me in its cynical mockery, its utter immunity from all tender sentiment. So would she laugh if ever I opened my heart to her. "Come along—and be careful not to make a noise."

Intermittently switching-on her torch, she led me towards the door and out along a dark passage. We crept along it, turned a corner towards a glow of light. A minute or two later, lying flat on my chest side by side with her, I was looking down from a horseshoe-arched gallery on a strange spectacle.

Below us was a large hall, lit with hanging lights, and filled with wild-looking Moors, who squatted on their haunches, jabbering together in a babel of voices.

"Sheikhs from up-country," Miss Satterthwaite whispered to me. "They are waiting for the 'saint' Mohammed Idrees.

To-night the signal for the revolt is going to be given."

Even as she spoke a sudden silence fell on the assembly. All glances turned towards an end of the hall (we were looking down from one of the sides) and those at the back scrambled to their feet. From behind a curtain within the horseshoe-arched colonnade which supported the gallery issued—with a dignified solemnity of gait and gesture—a tall, ragged-garmented, haggard-faced, black-bearded Moor. As he advanced into the light, I saw that he had only one eye. The left was missing—and the absence of it gave his dirt-grimed features a peculiar expression of sinister ferocity. It was, instantly recognizable, Mohammed Idrees. A murmur swelled in the hall as he took his stand before those wild tribesmen, was silenced at the lift of his hand.

"*A shahadu, la ilaha il Allah; wa ashahadu inna seyyidina Mohammed er-rasul Allah!*" A thrill ran through me, unbeliever though I was, at the sonorous invocation, familiar even to my limited comprehension of Arabic, as he began to speak. And, though I could only vaguely catch here and there a recognizable word in the vehemently-uttered sentences which followed, the drift of his harangue was plain enough. With the power of an orator of genius, he was lashing those tribesmen to a frenzy of fierce fanaticism. They shouted at him, sprang to their feet in a brandishment of weapons, jabbered excited mutual approval to each other in the pauses of his speech. Wild cries of "Allah akbar!" "Allah akbar!"—"Death to the N'zrani!" "Jehad! Jehad!"—mingled with sentences from the Koran in chaotic clamour, were stilled to a murmurous undertone as he resumed his discourse, broke out again, with a savage ferocity that sent a chill through my blood, in a vociferous enthusiasm that could not be restrained. And the gaunt, ragged, black-bearded figure of the one-eyed "saint"—that one eye of his glowing demoniacally with the passionate fire of his harangue—stood dominating them, lifting them, at each furious outburst, to a more intense frenzy of blood-lust and fanaticism. At last he raised his hand high above his head, called on them to swear with him the oath that cannot be broken, an oath of merciless extermination of the unbeliever.

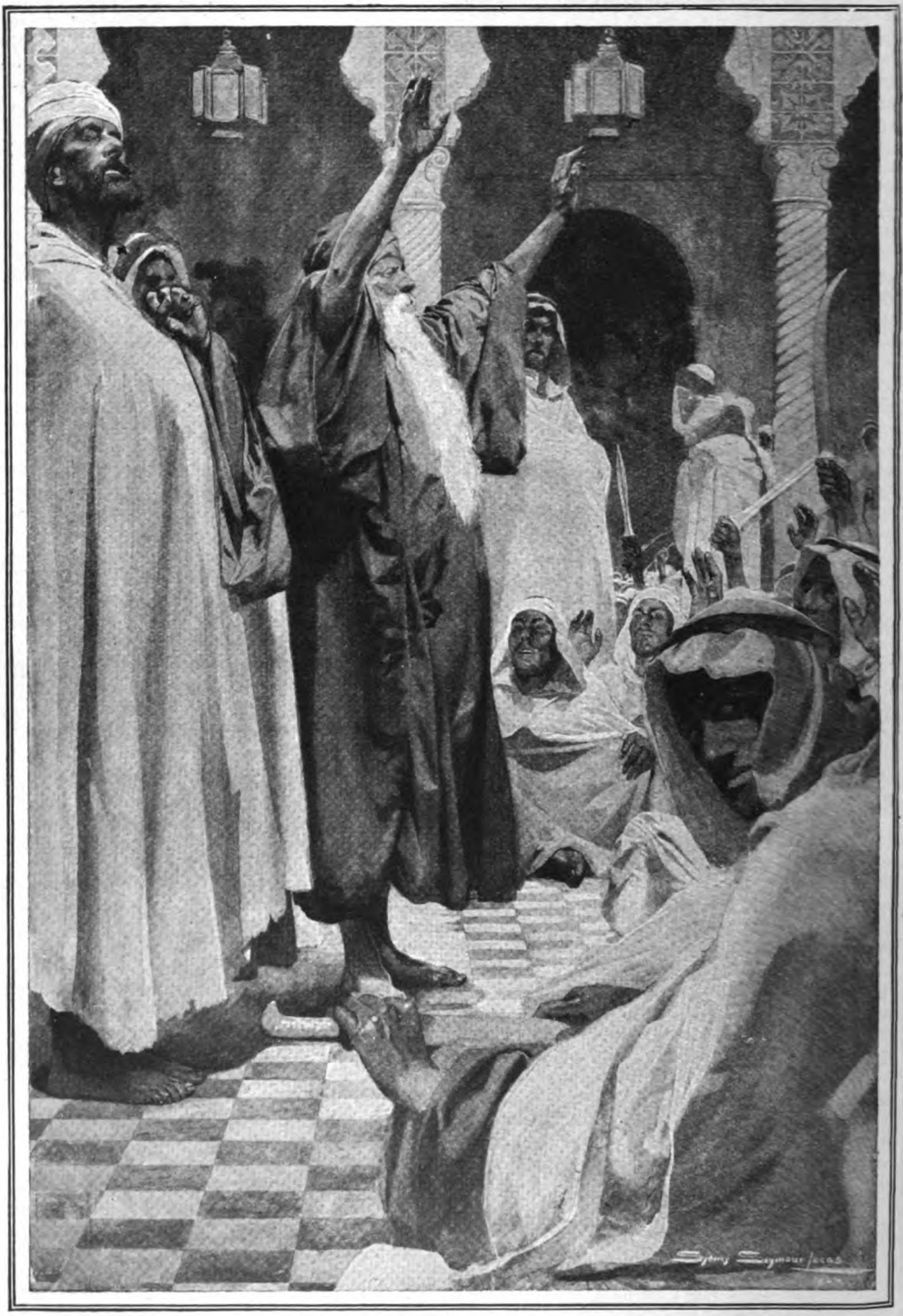
EVEN as the clamour burst forth, there was a sudden new note in the cries which reverberated through the hall, a tumultuous swirl in the rearmost of the throng. I craned my neck to see what was happening. Down below the crowd was parting to admit the passage of a venerable old man—a white beard to his waist and the green turban of Mecca on his head—who leaned heavily upon the shoulder of a handsome Moorish boy as he tottered forward. A shout that had begun at the back of the hall was now caught up and reiterated by the whole of the seething, excited mob. My Arabic was just sufficient to understand it. "*Ajiba! Ajiba!* A miracle! A miracle! Way for the saint raised by Allah from the dead! Way for the holy man from the holy city of Tarhon! Way, ye sons of crows—may Allah burn ye! In the name of Allah, way! Way for the saint Sidi Yusuf ben Mashish, raised by Allah from the tomb to testify unto us! He who was dead—the most holy saint Hadj Yusuf ben Mashish—O sons of dogs!—comes to give ye his blessing! *Ajiba! Ajiba!* A miracle! *El hamdu l'illah!* Praise to Allah! A miracle! A miracle!"

I saw a puzzled look on the face of the one-eyed "saint" Mohammed Idrees as the tottering old man, leaning still on the shoulder of the handsome boy, came towards him. But he was too practised a demagogue to oppose himself, even if he had wished it, to this sudden clamour of the mob he had stirred to frenzy. He gave, though with a bad grace, the customary salutation—"*Essalamu alaïkum*"—"Peace be unto you." The old man—he shook pathetically as with a palsy—answered nothing. He stood side by side with the one-eyed fanatic and turned to the crowd.

"O true believers and followers of Mohammed, the Prophet of Allah!" he cried, in a shaky, ancient voice. In a hushed silence the entire assembly bent in superstitious awe before him—only here and there was a murmur: "*Ajiba!*—a miracle! He was dead! Allah knoweth—I saw him buried!" which stilled as he continued. "I come to save ye from a snare of Shaitan! I come—Allah the most great is my witness—I come, raised from the tomb by the holy Prophet himself—to save ye from destruction! This man who stands before you to lure you to damnation is a *kafer*—a N'zrani—an emissary of the Evil One—an impostor!"

The old man's voice was drowned in a tumult that seemed suddenly released from the infernal regions. I caught shouts of "*Kizzab! Kizzab!*"—"Impostor! Impostor!"—mingled with cries of derision, of anger, with invocations to Allah, with wild vociferations that were meaningless to me.

My eyes were on the one-eyed Moor, now so suddenly an object of suspicion. He sprang back a step, whipped out a revolver. Before he could level it, he was seized from



"O true believers and followers of Mohammed, the Prophet of Allah!" he cried, in a shaky, ancient voice. "I come to save ye from destruction!"

behind by a couple of Moors, and in one of those Moors I recognized, to my astonishment—Davies! The weapon dropped to the floor as the man's arms were caught back.

"O sheikhs and Great Ones of Islam!" cried the old man, dominating the uproar. "By the mercy of Allah, the most great, the all-protecting, to Whom be praise, this imposture shall be revealed to you so that ye yourselves shall know beyond doubt the truth of this matter! This dog has, as ye see, but one eye—the other he sold to Shaitan in exchange for power to deceive ye! Behold now, how by the power of Allah I restore to him that eye—wrested by Allah himself from the djinns of Eblis!"

He turned to Mohammed Idrees, now writhing ineffectually in the grip of the two stalwart Moors—one of them had got a jiu-jitsu grip upon him, twisted his hands behind his back—and with a quick movement thrust something into the sightless eye, stood aside. The Moor glared suddenly from two eyes!

A shout of awed astonishment, of invocations against all demons, went up from the throng.

"Look, O sheikhs!" cried the old man. "And behold the N'zrani!"

With another quick movement he whipped from the head of the struggling Mohammed Idrees a black wig and a black beard, pushed something into one eye. The man stood suddenly blonde—a monocle caught for a fraction of an instant in one of his two eyes before it dropped to smash upon the floor—*von Stürpp himself!*

There was one awful murderous howl from the crowd as it surged suddenly forward in a tumult of brandished knives. But before it could reach the wretched man—his captors had released him the instant he was unmasked—the Moorish boy, on whose shoulder the old man had been leaning, sprang at him with a wild cry and a blade that gleamed swift as a lightning-flash. Von Stürpp made an ineffectual startled gesture to protect himself, went headlong to the floor. And then suddenly I recognized that handsome boy—it was the Spanish woman, exulting in her vengeance as she stood over the man who had deceived her!

The venerable old man turned to the mob that surged up about him.

"Fly! Fly!" he cried. "As Allah is my witness, ye have been betrayed! All your secrets are known to the N'zrani! They who remain here will of a surety be cast into prison! Fly—in the name of Allah—fly!"

The mob needed but little persuasion. They fled in wild disorderly panic. In a moment or two that hall was empty, save for the green-turbaned old man, Davies, two other Moors, and—no, as I looked again while, followed by Miss Satterthwaite, I dashed down the stairs that led into the hall—the Spanish woman was lying across the dead body of the man she had loved, her hand still clutching the hilt of the poniard she had driven into herself.

AT the foot of the stairs I hesitated—should I slip out unnoticed? I had no desire, despite the presence of Davies, to mix myself up with that old fanatic. Miss Satterthwaite passed me, went straight to him, took a packet of papers from her dress, held them out to him.

"Here are the documents you wanted, Chief," she said, as calm as though she had just taken them from an index-file.

"Thank you, Veronica," said a familiar voice. The patriarch removed his green turban as he smiled at her, plucked off his long white beard—it was Mr. Quentin Quayne! "I think we have completed our job very thoroughly—more thoroughly than I had intended even." He looked round to the dead Spanish woman. "I did not intend that—for example. I brought her with me because, even up to the last moment, although I suspected it, I was not sure whether Mohammed Idrees and von Stürpp were the same person—but I was sure that a jealous woman's vision could penetrate any disguise—as in fact it did." He turned to me with a smile. "Rather fortunate I found that spare artificial eye and the monocle the night we searched his rooms, Mr. Creighton, I think, what?"

I stared at him, still bewildered.

"But—but who did these people think you were?" I stammered. "What was that they shouted about miracles?"

He smiled again.

"I happened to hear that my old friend, Sidi Yusuf ben Mashish, of the sacred city of Tarhon, one of the most venerated saints in Morocco, had recently deceased. I thought it might be well to resuscitate him. It worked even better than I had expected."

(Next month: "The Paris Frock.")

THE STRANGEST SECTS IN THE WORLD

by

SHAW DESMOND

WITHIN the last decade or two, and particularly since the war, the world has seen an eruption of queer sects and "peculiar peoples" which has no parallel in history, religious sects which run the gamut of hysteria from the worship of the sun to human sacrifice itself. This is especially true of the North American continent, from which most of the data in this article has been taken by the writer, who, in order to collect it, has within the last few years travelled nearly fifty thousand miles.

In the United States itself the weirdest faiths can spring up in a night, gather to themselves anything from a couple of thousand to a couple of millions of adherents, and then vanish from the map. Some of these "faiths" are the product of disordered imaginations or, sometimes, of religious fakirs who, "gathering the harvest while they may"—one of them at least to my personal knowledge netting a cool two thousand to three thousand pounds a week—ultimately disappear into the infinite of which they profess such exact knowledge.

THE APOSTOLICS.

In Portland, Oregon, I witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a great white hall, dazzling with electric suns, and holding some thousands of people, across one end of which a low bench or platform, perhaps eighteen inches high and four feet wide and running from wall to wall, was filled with men and women writhing in agony of spirit. As though tormented with devils, there rose from the mass at intervals such a babel of cries, groans, and howls as might rival the Zoo at feeding time.

Every now and then one of the writhing bodies, apparently seized with convulsions, would rise up, become cataleptic, and speak in unknown tongues at perhaps three hundred words a minute, the words pouring out in a ceaseless stream impossible to any normal orator, however great. I was assured by the prominent journalist by my side, himself, like many leading bankers, lawyers, doctors, and financiers, a convert to the "Apostolics," or "Tongue-Speakers," as they are more popularly known, that the "possessed" beings I saw before me were speaking Russian, Chinese, etc., tongues of which they had absolutely no knowledge in their normal moments. The curious thing is that linguists having no sympathy whatever with the "Tongue-Speakers" have testified to the accuracy of this assertion, a phenomenon which some scientists have attempted to explain by "telepathy."

This strange people, who claim that the gift of tongues is one proof of their "apostolic succession" to the one and only Truth, also claim that "miracles have not ceased" and that they can work them at will. Each night sees one of their enormous mission-buildings in Portland packed to the doors with all sorts and conditions of men, from murderers to ministers, and all more or less in a frenzy of excitement, under which the "miracles" are worked.

One man was telling the people how his mother, after a single meeting there, had returned home to find herself instantly cured of cancer. An Italian woman dying of consumption, after being "prayed over," as the frenzied appeals are called, was, she says, cured within twenty-four hours, and at any rate now looks the picture of health. Another sick woman, wrought up to a terrible pitch of nervous strain, all at once began to speak fluent Norwegian, although she insists she had never heard a word of the tongue in her life before, and found herself healed.

One of the queerest things about this sect is "The Children's Gatherings." In the building known as the "Children's Tabernacle" hundreds of youngsters may be seen with their own orchestras, shouting and crying like their elders as they "testify." It is at once a wonderful and a piteous sight to hear the childish voices raised in a perfect cacophony of sound and to see the little faces writhing in agony of spirit.

The "Apostolics" are amongst the world's greatest propagandists, using aeroplanes, motor-boats, etc., in the spread of their curious doctrines, and receiving over nine thousand letters a month. Nearly twenty thousand letters and pamphlets are sometimes sent out by them in a single day!

"The Sky Pilot" is the name of the 'plane which they use for propaganda, the pilot scattering as he flies tens of thousands of leaflets, sometimes descending literally from the skies to hold his meetings in the fields and in the open spaces of American towns. They have now a fleet of motor-boats, one of which is called the *Morning Star*, which board the ships in the American ports.

THE HOLY ROLLERS.

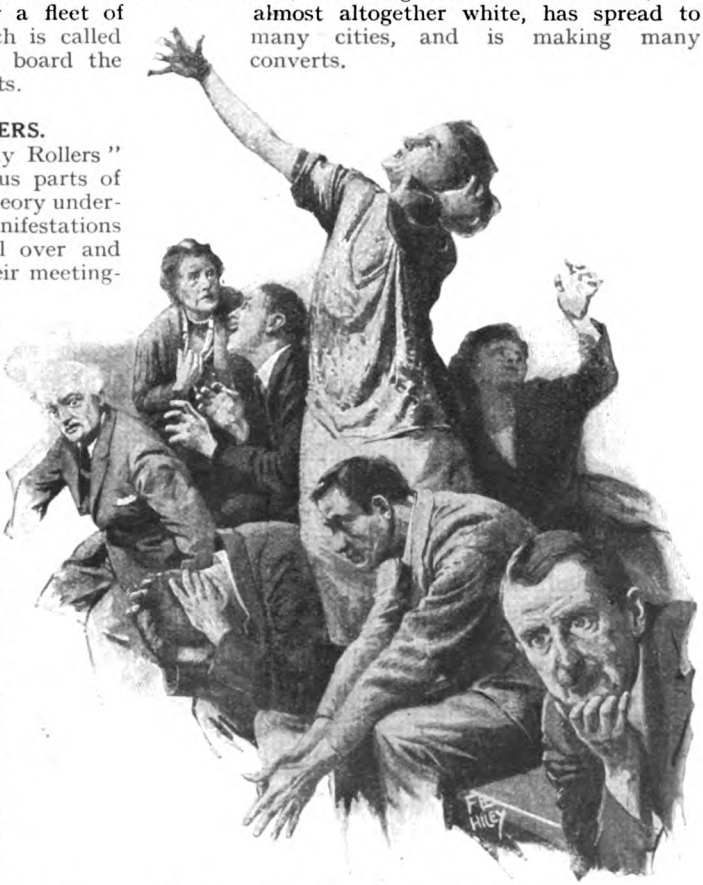
The now famous "Holy Rollers" are to be found in various parts of the United States. The theory underlying the extraordinary manifestations which cause them to roll over and over upon the floors of their meeting-places is that of "possession"—that is, possession by a spirit which they claim causes them to see visions even up to the point of "seeing into heaven," and to have revelations vouchsafed to them alone of the earth's peculiar peoples.

The scientific fact behind these queer rollings is exactly the same fact that lies behind "the Whirling Dervishes" of the desert. By constant movement, especially "turning" or "rolling" movements, a state of catalepsy, and ultimately one of trance, is induced, a state in which the "Roller" sees visions and dreams dreams — all of them, to him or her, real. This state of "trance" has much in common with that of the "Apostolics."

What may be called "a Black Sect that went White" forms one of the most interesting of the stories of America's strange sects.

A few short years ago, ten negroes met in a room in the suburbs of Los Angeles on the Pacific Coast, a city which, during my last visit, seemed to produce a new religion every twenty-four hours. For ten days and nights, it is claimed, these men neither ate nor slept, praying ceaselessly, hurling themselves from wall to wall, and travailing in spirit. Finally, they commenced "to see things," with the result that those who began to visit the room in which they were confined were also "smitten," indulging in the same contortions and, as they said, "seeing into the next world."

A wealthy lady, a white, hearing of this queer sect, took the matter in hand herself, and, as report has it, "ran the whole show." To-day this sect, which has many popular names, including the "Faith-Healers," is almost altogether white, has spread to many cities, and is making many converts.



Every now and then one of the writhing bodies would rise up, become cataleptic, and speak in unknown tongues.

THE INNER BROTHERS.

A sect which is one of the few sects to include both negro and white, and known as "The Inner Brothers," or "The Spirit's Elect," has a few tiny scattered congregations in the States of New York and New Jersey. These peculiar people believe that, outside the handful of the "Elect" and any who, not yet having joined them, still subscribe to every jot and tittle of their most extraordinary Biblical interpretations, the whole world is doomed to hell.

These people believe that if one of the faithful marries outside the sect, he loses his soul for all eternity. So rigid are they in their absolutely literal interpretations of the Bible, over the meaning of individual words in which they will sometimes hold weeks of continuous meetings, that they have already split into the "exclusives" and "inclusives," the former of whom neither read newspapers nor books and refuse to "break bread" with any not of the faithful.

Their chants, or hymns, are, literally, awe-inspiring, and in the semi-darkness of their meeting-houses have an eerie effect. They are full of threats of damnation and torture for all unbelievers and are, perhaps, the most bloodthirsty hymns on earth.

THE SUN-WORSHIPPERS.

The Michigan "Sun-Worshippers," with their headquarters in Chicago, have at various times given the authorities much food for thought, and, let it be said, much trouble.

This particular sect, so far as one can gather from their extremely hazy interpretations, worship the sun as the giver of life, not, perhaps, as a god, but as a symbol. This group of fanatics, like so many other similar groups, appear to have a rooted objection to the wearing of clothes, and in their queer ritual will stand for hours at a time, both sexes being in a state of almost complete nudity, staring into the sun's eye. Their leader, who some time ago got into trouble with the authorities, an extraordinary specimen of religious fanatic, had so developed this power of "sun-staring" that he could look without blenching full into the most powerful sun for many hours, an experiment which in an ordinary man would end in total blindness.

The "Apostolics" use aeroplanes to spread their curious doctrines, often descending to hold meetings in the fields.

They believe that from the sun or the "Sun-Spirit" they draw all life, and that this staring, like the dances and chants of which we have spoken, induces "revelation."

Another Michigan sect is known as that of "The House of David." Its headquarters are at Benton Harbour, but it has offshoots in other parts of America, and I remember having some strange high, tower-like buildings shown to me in a part of the States many hundreds of miles from Michigan, which I was told constituted the dwellings of this "enclosed" community.

The Benton buildings are constructed in the form of a beehive internally, with many rooms radiating from the "King's" apartment, the head of the order being known as "King David."

Not the least curious

One of the "Holy Rollers," who roll over and over upon the floors of their meeting-places.

The members of the sect known as "The House of David," who do not cut their hair, are amongst the weirdest-looking creatures on earth, but they also have been some of the finest baseball players!

thing about this community, run as it is claimed upon strictly Old Testament lines, are their two baseball teams, one of girls and one of men.

The men, who do not cut their hair and who sometimes wear it in two long plaits, are amongst the weirdest-looking creatures on earth, but they also have been some of the finest baseball players! Their activity was phenomenal, and their crack "pitcher," Mooney, has been in his time eagerly sought after by the American big league teams. Watching him pitch, with his hair almost to his waist, was like watching some strange being from another world.

Another of these "long-haired" sects, apparently a branch of the Rechabites, claims that for men to cut their hair at any time during their lives is mortal sin. I have seen these men walking about the streets of an American city, their hair made into a bun at the back of the head and with beards like aprons, the latter sometimes being, I was told, fastened behind the back during their work as bakers, a trade followed by many.

An analogous sect is one which never cuts hair or beard from birth to death, the hair in the case of the men being wrapped around the top of the head and the beard being plaited and pushed inside the shirt or coat. Another sect, one of the leading members of which is the wife of one of the richest bankers in America and whom I met, claims that some of its members have been enabled to descend into the Lower World. And yet another, the Dunkards, who wash one another's feet as an article of faith and follow Lenin in one thing at least—that all things are held in common, except tooth-brushes, which I doubt if they use.

Most of these sects appear one day and are gone the next, but it must not be thought that this is the case with all.

In collecting the data for a recent book upon similar "excursions into the infinite," including a section upon American sects, I was surprised to find that some of the strangest of these experiments in fanaticism had already existed over a century.

Were I to set down the almost incredible tenets of certain sects which believe they are in daily and even hourly communication with the world of spirits, and some of which have lasted more than a hundred years, I should scarcely be believed. Some of the members of this particular type of sect have solemnly assured me that they have spoken with both angels and devils!

The most extraordinary of the heads of queer sects I met in America was undoubtedly "His Majesty Bala," a full-faced man of a certain implacable mildness whom I met in an anarchist haunt in Chicago. This gentleman gravely assured me that he was "the Prophet of God," foreordained for the founding of the "Pures' religion for the salvation of the Beautiful White Race," that he was immune to danger or death owing to his invisible bodyguard of four wingless angels, and that he knew the language of the Pures.

This "language" was a most curious medley of invented words, and was used to describe what was really a sort of Mohammedan paradise of a very earthy description. The account of this paradise as given stated that the ladies living in it were "jahatee," meaning "beautiful, like light," and that they were "yshasheewa" and "jendayae"—that is, lissom and handsome beyond description.

In his own words, "the Prophet preaches about wonderful things fifty thousand years old, never heard in the world! He preaches under inspiration!" But there is method about the madness of Bala. For he charges

so much for his pamphlets, and asks for "donations" "which will accordingly win great favour with the saints and angels." His exordium concludes: "Send cheque payable to the Prophet Bala"!

THE DEVIL-WORSHIPPERS.

One of these sects, known to the few who have studied it from the outside as the "Devil-Worshippers," even claim that they have spoken with the Father of Evil himself, stating that at their "black masses," as they may be called, he has materialized. One of the most prominent members of this sect, whom I recently met, is a very beautiful New York girl of Swiss origin, who, with a man reputed to be an ex-Oxford undergraduate, a man of rare charm and knowledge, for a time had a certain following amongst certain New York sets, many wealthy women falling under his influence, until they found him out.

THE-END-OF-THE-WORLDERS.

In a sort of throw-off from one of the new "miracle" sects, the extraordinary doctrine is beginning to be preached that no more children should be born into the world, "but that, instead, the world should concentrate upon" what they call "the Divine Child." An almost fanatical contempt for marriage and love, as ordinary mortals understand those things, is rapidly becoming the leading article of faith of this breakaway, which I have heard termed "The-End-of-the Worlders."

"If people *must* marry," said one of the leading members of "The-End-of-the-Worlders" to me in Boston, "they should live absolutely separate lives, concentrating purely and simply upon the new and Wondrous Child who is now to come to earth to save it from war and sin and sickness."

THE OBEAH-MAN.

The "Obeah-Man" and his practices have been known for centuries in the story of the negro sects. When I visited the Southern States I was brought into contact with many negroes, in one case having the opportunity, when addressing a "Black College" of some five hundred negroes of both sexes, of seeing how little civilization had been able to erase the age-long beliefs and superstitions of men and women who are often exceedingly intelligent. The "marching-hymns" and "laments" they sang to me might often have been the drone of the Voodoo magician.

Practically all negroes are touched with this heritage of a distant past. To some at least the black magician or sorcerer takes the part of the priest, and the practice of "black magic" that of the religious ceremony.

A typical instance of the practices of a black sect in the South may here be given.

Twelve negroes dressed in long white robes with scarlet sashes crouched in a circle around a negress who must have been nearly a hundred years old. On the heads of all were white turbans. Out of the circle came a low chant, almost a moan, with a weird lilt in it to which the circle of negroes moved, their eyes fastened upon the old woman as though their lives depended upon not losing sight of her bloodshot orbs. As the music grew in volume, the bodies of the men in the circle began to contort themselves, the negress also swaying to the eerie rhythm.

As one listened to the chant, one had exactly the feeling that one was becoming detached from one's body, "the soul floating free in space," as one who witnessed this orgy of black magic termed it.

The object of what is really a sort of induced hypnosis is to gain occult power, the old priestess or priest, as the case may be, claiming to be in touch with the spirits of the nether world. Lovers who have been unsuccessful in gaining the heart of their inamoratas will bring something belonging to her, such as a lock of hair, the priest pronouncing certain incantations over it, the unsuccessful suitor being told to place it on her person if possible and to bend all his will-power to getting what he desires.

In a case which came under my personal notice a negro magician put a curse upon a white engineer who had had the misfortune to offend him. From that instant the unfortunate man began to waste away, no doctor being able to diagnose any disease. All care was taken to prevent his food from being tampered with, even the water he drank being boiled. But all to no purpose.

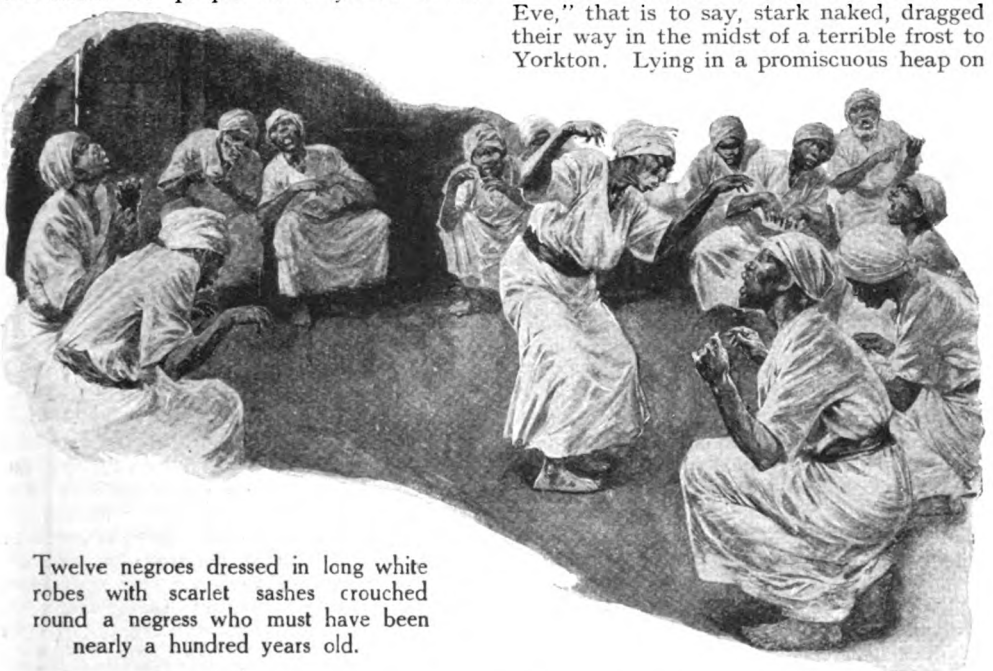
At last, when near death's door, a negro whom he had once helped came to him and said: "If you don't get the Voodoo-man to take off the hoodoo, you'll die." The Voodoo man was sent for, appeased by a substantial present and apology, and from that moment the victim recovered and is to-day a healthy man. The writer makes no attempt to explain these things—he simply gives the facts.

THE DOUKHOBÓRS.

Perhaps this account of the strange sects and peculiar peoples of the North American continent cannot better conclude than by a short description of that queerest of all sects—the Doukhobórs, originally a Russian sect, which migrated to Canada after enduring untold barbarities at the hands of the Russian authorities.

Their belief starts with the assertion that in a sense they believe nothing, the Holy Trinity, they say, being beyond comprehension. But this non-belief does not prevent them having the most exacerbated internecine quarrels about doctrine, there being many sects of Doukhobórs.

These people sometimes elect one of their number as Deity, doing him reverence as the Supreme Being, and are one of the few religious sects to appoint women as Chieftainesses or High Priests. All sorts and conditions of people have joined them at one time or another, including Prince Hilkóff, nephew of an ex-Russian Minister of Transport.



Twelve negroes dressed in long white robes with scarlet sashes crouched round a negress who must have been nearly a hundred years old.

Morality, as we understand it, has no place in their theories of sex, although, as a matter of fact, taking them as a whole, they are probably, owing to the asceticism which is part of their faith, more moral almost than any outsiders, despite the fact that their leaders have, it is said, at times been libertines. Any attempt, however, to find out exactly what they believe about marriage is sternly resented, and there seems to be a sort of conspiracy to keep the stranger from finding out.

Amongst the most curious beliefs of the North American Doukhobórs is, or rather was, for their beliefs have now been modified, that it was wrong to use horses for ploughing, one extreme section preaching that man should do all the work necessary, and that it was a sin to till the ground, which, he said, "spoiled the earth." It is, at any rate, a fact that, lacking horses, at one time the Dŏukhobórs ploughed the earth of North America by teams of women, harnessed twelve pairs at a time to a plough, with one man as driver.

Their mad pilgrimages have made them famous throughout the world.

Not so very long ago, in one of these mad treks, taken at a moment's notice "under the influence of the Spirit," men and women together, going, as they said, "in the manner of the first man, Adam, and Eve," that is to say, stark naked, dragged their way in the midst of a terrible frost to Yorkton. Lying in a promiscuous heap on the icy ground, not one of these fanatics was frozen, although those who watched them, warmly clothed though they were, were nearly frozen as they stood.

The reason for these sudden lapses into nudity on the part of this strange people is not generally understood. It is simply an attempt "to return to Nature and to God." When asked why they had no boots, they said: "Jesus had no boots." When asked why they had discarded their clothes, they answered simply: "Adam and Eve had no clothes."

It must not be forgotten in this account of some of the strange sects of North America that their members form but a tiny minority of the population of that vast continent. Nor are religious fanaticism and "peculiar peoples" confined to the American continent. They are to be found in the oldest of civilizations, in that of India, as in America itself, the youngest of white civilizations.

THE ORDEAL OF MR. JUSTICE AYLESBEARE

by

AUSTIN PHILIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY H. E. ELCOCK

GUILTY! Guilty, unquestionably, overwhelmingly! And certain, equally, that as a result of a recent general consultation of the Judges the sentence must necessarily be a heavy one, to act as deterrent from such crimes.

Sir Francis Aylesbeare put down the depositions—just read very thoroughly after his frugal dinner at the Judge's lodgings—and lay back in his chair reflectively. There was a reason for his thoughtfulness, wholly apart from the nature of the case; in itself a most afflicting and unpleasant one. A chord in his memory had vibrated and "the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound" had been struck strongly—and that by the name of the prisoner.

"Charles Edward Carbutt!" It was, of course, only a mere coincidence, and could not possibly be anything further because of sheer geographical distance. But, nevertheless, thoughts were leaping and flaming and burning in the great lawyer's bosom—memories quickened into life by that name and gaining intensity from his present solitude, and which aroused in him a great, heartfelt thankfulness that all in his life was so calm.

IT is often at that moment when a man congratulates himself secretly upon having achieved a course of real tranquillity that the stream of his life is set in spate by the unknown forces which govern human destinies; and this was to be the case now with the most distinguished lawyer who adorned the English Bench. For the door opened; and the old manservant who had served three generations of Judges in these Belboro lodgings entered, bearing a salver.

Upon it was an envelope which Sir Francis opened leisurely. But he started as he read the contents.

"Who brought this?" he asked, in a voice which trembled a little.

"A man, m'lud. He was a stranger to me. He said it was very urgent, but that there was no answer."

The Judge nodded and seemed as though about to ask another question, and then dismissed the servant with a gesture. Even before the door had shut on the man his lean face, with its long, legal upper-lip, so keen but not cruel or harsh in its expression, seemed suddenly to have gone quite grey.

Slowly, methodically, thoughtfully, he read the letter several times again.

> *"Has Sir Francis Aylesbeare observed the full name of the prisoner in the blackmail case fixed for trial to-morrow morning? And when passing sentence—in the event of a conviction—will he be mindful, or otherwise, of August, 1892?"*

Not words, on the surface, of any supreme or tremendous import. Yet sufficient, evidently, to destroy—as surely it had never yet been destroyed—the peace of a very strong man!

Greyer still, and with every sign of a real and growing fear plainly visible now in those sensitive features, Mr. Justice Aylesbeare picked up the batch of depositions, at the head of each page of which was typed "Rex versus Charles Edward Carbutt." Then he rose to his feet suddenly and began striding up and down.

"Was it possible?" he asked himself, feverishly.

And then, glancing again at the letter, which he still held—cold and written

evidence that surely it was all too possible —he became aware, definitely and overwhelmingly, that his career and his future and his whole reputation were in the hands of some hostile person.

Blackmail! Of course it was blackmail —just as the case which he was going to try to-morrow was blackmail—though blackmail of a different nature. There was in this instance, seemingly, no attempt to extort money, but he had received a plain hint that an incident in his past life was known, and that, if he dared to pass such a sentence as the evidence would doubtless make it his bounden duty to pass, that same secret and damning incident would be made known in frank revenge throughout Britain and her Dominions and he would be compelled to resign his position and to pass into workless obscurity. And more than that, even—much more. The great philanthropic scheme which he—a childless man —was making the hobby and consolation of his later years—the splendid plan of providing an asylum and retreat for outworn and declining barristers who had achieved a measure of distinction and then had fallen into poverty through ill-health or changes in the legislation—would be completely discredited.

Nor did it end there, alas! There was also the human, the moral side of it, the shame, the remorse, and the appalling responsibility—his, surely, down all the ages, since there is no deed but has its definite consequence. There was, further—since there could now be no sort of question as to what that too familiar name meant!—the frightful strain and suffering which awaited him to-morrow in the court.

In his great and growing stress—fast approaching now to real agony—Aylesbeare, very naturally, thought of the person he was most fond of: that wife of his who for thirty years had been his daily inspiration, and who had shared his ideals and aspirations, and who had worked with him indefatigably to raise the money for that projected "Great Good Place" which was to shelter those broken members of his own profession, and for which fifty thousand pounds were still needed. She had gone to dinner at the Dean's, to whose house she had been escorted by the young barrister who acted as his "Associate" during Assize-time. He would set out immediately and fetch her, and in this black hour, as in happier ones, state a case and ask her for advice.

THE town clocks were striking ten as Sir Francis reached the narrow High Street, and, realizing that he was too early (for he intended not to call at the Deanery but to join Lady Aylesbeare as she left it), he lessened with an effort a pace which the whips of fear had made rapid, and, having reached the Close, began to stride up and down the open space in front of the cathedral. But, big as it was, to him it seemed but the yard of a monstrous prison, and that, as he walked, he was watched always by eyes, jailer-like and hostile, which had knowledge of his imminent shame.

A bright light showed presently beyond the iron gates in the high red-brick wall of the Deanery garden; and a minute later Martin Harrington, the "Associate," emerged, escorting Lady Aylesbeare, whose face and figure were very visible in the full moonlight. She was a little woman, but exquisitely proportioned, with a walk full of daintiness and character, and though her hair was dead white it was no more snowy than her beautiful neck and shoulders, while her eyes were alive and most intelligent and her features full of race and human kindness.

The Judge greeted the couple; and all three walked side by side till they reached the low and vaulted archway whose great nail-studded door was always open, since the gardens of the Bishop's Palace (which it gave on) were never closed now to the public, as the building itself was too immense to permit of any ecclesiastic residing there in present and post-war conditions.

Here Aylesbeare touched his wife's arm gently.

"I don't feel a bit sleepy!" he said, turning to his Associate. "Will you go on, Harrington? Marion, shall we take a turn or two together? You will probably be all the better for it after that hot room at the Deanery!"

Lady Aylesbeare assented very willingly, and with her arm within her husband's she passed into the Palace gardens. The moon was shining full on the walls of the ancient building, with its tall, mullioned windows, and on the great twin Norman towers of the cathedral, whose stern blackness the bright light made look even more dark and more militant than in the daytime. It was the Palace itself—since the authorities were anxious to sell it to obtain money for increasing the stipends of ill-paid clergy—that these two people had decided was the ideal haunt of peace for their new "Home."

The pair took a turn or two round the lawn—so smooth and so shaven and so English—and then sat down on one of the benches which faced the splendid old building. How strangely different, indeed, were their emotions! In the heart of the man were despair, fear, shame, and sense of loss, and final failure; in that of the woman joy, happiness, certainty of final achieve-

ment, appreciation of beauty—and above all things hope and confidence.

"How wonderful it looks!" said Lady Aylesbeare, suddenly. "And to think that we shall get it for our 'Home,' Francis. The Dean tells me the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are wholly favourable to our purchasing it. We only need to get that final fifty thousand pounds now!"

"We shall never get it!"

"What?"

"No, Marion. I have something to confess to you—something very terrible. An old folly has found me out!"

"An old folly!"

"Yes, darling. Let me tell you quickly. It concerns an incident in my past life."

The Judge put a hand on the hand of his wife which was nearest him and which had begun to tremble now, despite her great self-mastery. Leaning forward, looking straight ahead of him, he began to speak rapidly and clearly: all the great agony which he was enduring very visible beneath the brightness of the moon.

"As you know, I was thirty-five when I married you, and you know, too, how fierce and unremitting had been my struggle to make good, and how little of what is called 'pleasure' I had experienced since I came down from Oxford, and how lonely a life I had been living. But, Marion, as so often happens, there was a moment when there came a sudden reaction against all my celibacy and asceticism, and one long vacation, when I was on a walking tour in the West and staying at Exeter, I met a little Cornish milliner in one of the big shops there—and later on she told me there was going to be a baby. I saw her through her trouble and helped her out to New Zealand to a sister, and when her son came of age I gave him two thousand pounds to start him on a farm (the mother died a good many years ago), and I had every reason to believe that he was doing excellently, though I have heard nothing of him for five years and more. Well, to-night, as I was going through the depositions relating to the big case of blackmail that I am trying to-morrow, I was struck by the similarity of the name of the prisoner—Charles Edward Carbutt. I was telling myself it must be merely a coincidence, when the servant brought me this letter, which had been given him by an unknown man who had not waited for an answer!"

Sir Francis drew out the frightful missive and put it into the trembling hand of the woman who meant so much to him, and then, full of wretchedness, watched her read it in the day-bright moonlight.

"Has Sir Francis Aylesbeare observed the full name of the prisoner in the blackmail case fixed for trial to-morrow morning? And when passing sentence—in the event of a conviction—will he be mindful, or otherwise, of August, 1892?"

"He knows!" said his wife, presently, turning to him breathlessly. "The man who wrote this knows your secret!"

"Most undoubtedly!"

"And he implies that if you sum up against Carbutt, or give a heavy sentence, he will expose you!"

"Only too surely!"

"But what if he does, Francis? The mother is dead and it is all many years since it happened. Surely the knowledge means nothing to anybody nowadays!"

Lady Aylesbeare ended eagerly, not yet envisaging the dreadful case wholly: an optimist always by temperament, and as such the inspirer of the strong and striving man who sat beside her. But this time Fate had loaded the dice and the scales had sunk too low for further hoping; and the Judge sadly shook his head.

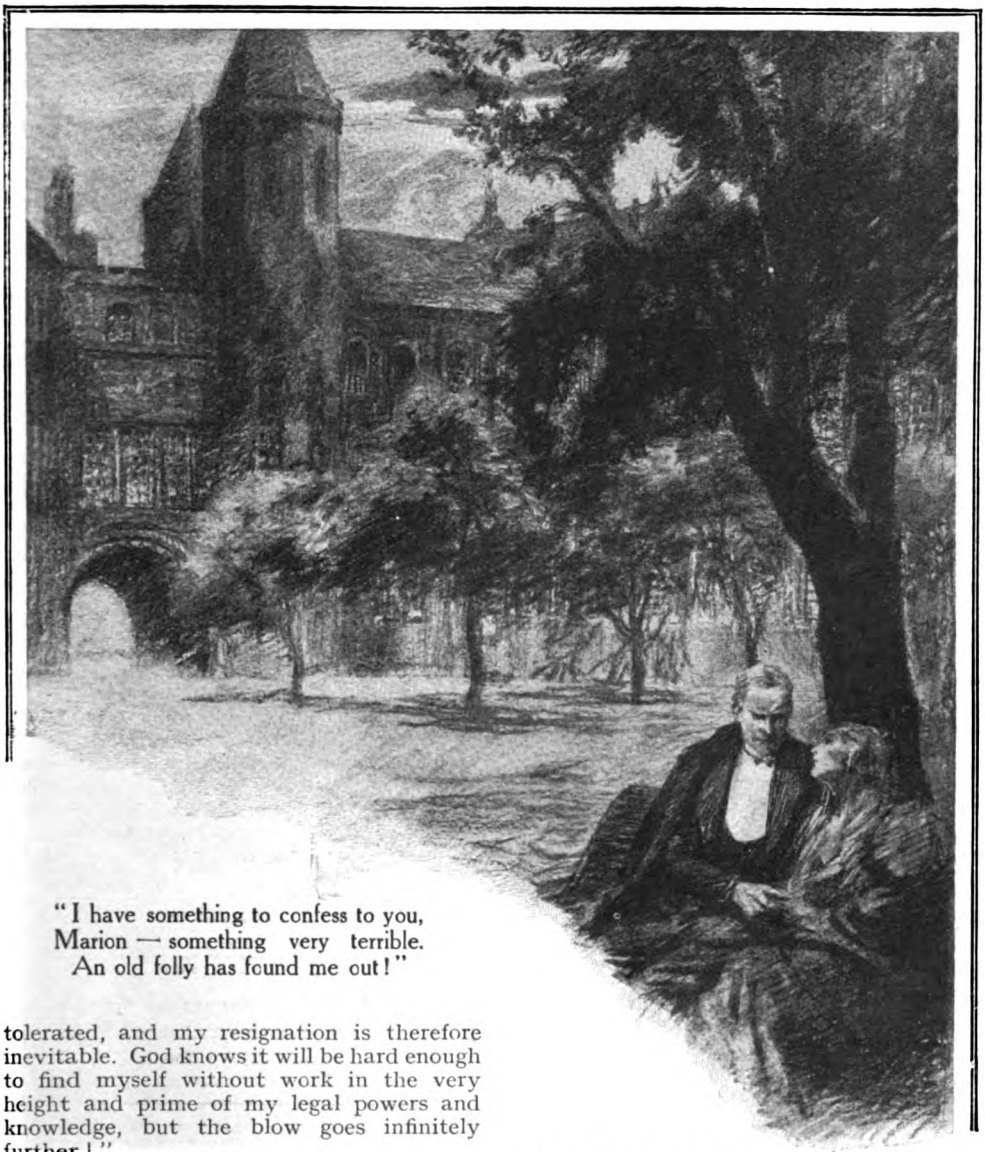
"My dear," he almost whispered. "Just reflect a moment. This is my own natural son whom I have got to send into a long term of imprisonment. Let me point out all the details!"

FOR just another moment Sir Francis sat looking very tenderly but hopelessly at the beautiful, the exquisite profile of this woman whom he loved so truly and so tenderly, and who had given the best years of her life to help him, and who had shared his best ambitions and aspirations. Then very quietly, very clearly, he marshalled the array of hostile facts.

"As I take it, I am faced with two alternatives. The one is that I bow to this blackmail—it *is* blackmail!—and that I sum up in favour of, or sentence lightly, this natural son of mine who himself has become a blackmailer, and that I am false to my position as a Judge and to what that position stands for in the sight of my fellow-countrymen. That, I think you will agree, is impossible!"

"Absolutely impossible, Francis!"

"Very well, then. I am going to do my duty. But, having done it, I shall certainly not be forgiven by the friends of the prisoner. Within a week the details will be known all over England, and no one will believe that I did not know he was my son till the night before the trial, and I shall be stigmatized as having been eager to take such a first-class opportunity of getting rid of somebody who knew too much about me. A few people may believe my motives pure ones; but scandals about the past lives and present conduct of His Majesty's Judges naturally cannot be



"I have something to confess to you, Marion — something very terrible. An old folly has found me out!"

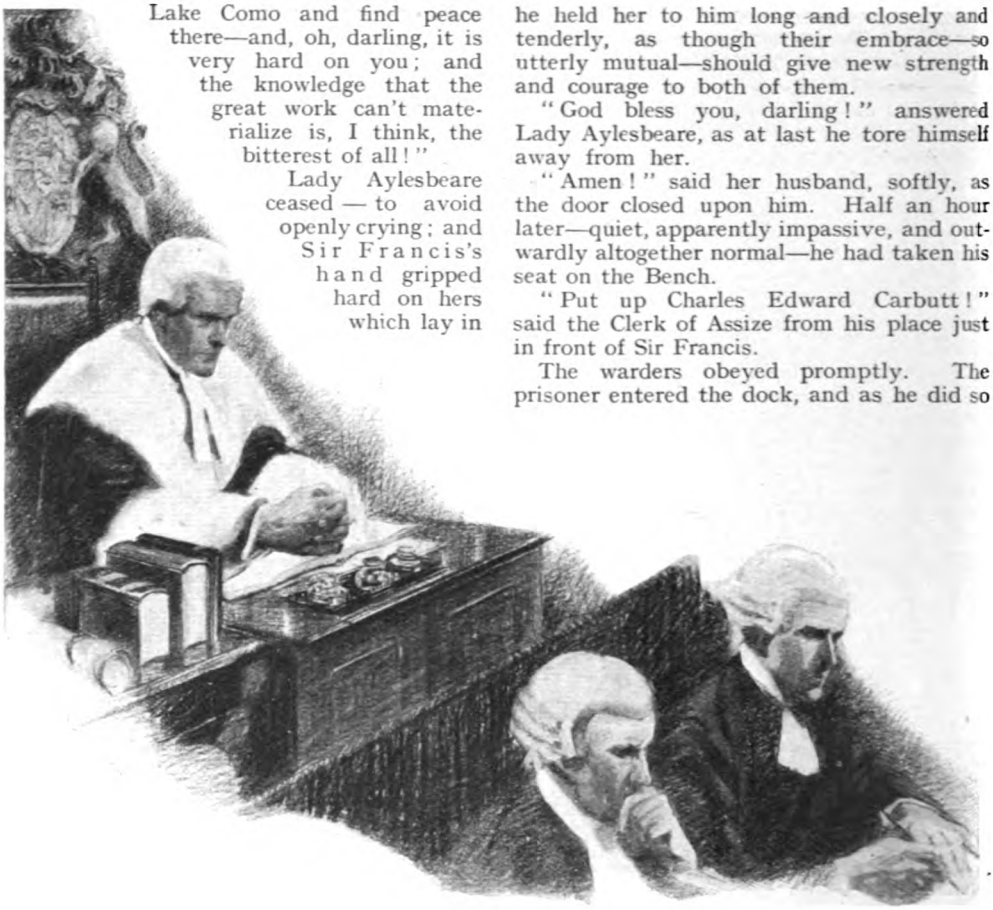
tolerated, and my resignation is therefore inevitable. God knows it will be hard enough to find myself without work in the very height and prime of my legal powers and knowledge, but the blow goes infinitely further!"

"You mean the 'Home'?"

"Alas, yes, Marion, darling. We want fifty thousand pounds to complete this, our dream, our sorely-needed mission—and who now is going to subscribe, or trust me, or to believe that I am not grinding some special personal axe in working to establish this refuge for broken members of my own profession? Oh, my dear, my very dear, my whole life's work is brought to nothing. Seeing how I strove—how hard and Spartanly I lived between twenty-three and the time of my sure success and our marriage—I have been dearly punished for one lapse!"

Sir Francis ended broken-heartedly and remained with bowed head, leaning forward. His wife, seeking to console him, took one of his hands and held it gently; and the couple sat there, silent and without hope, for several minutes till the woman's tender love found verbal expression again.

"My dear," she managed, presently. "It is terrible, this thought, this probability of your resigning, and I know how awful it is going to be for you. But if the very worst comes—as it seems it must come—why, I must help you to find some new interest—we must travel—you must write a book or something, and we will go and live awhile on



Lake Como and find peace there—and, oh, darling, it is very hard on you; and the knowledge that the great work can't materialize is, I think, the bitterest of all!"

Lady Aylesbeare ceased — to avoid openly crying; and Sir Francis's hand gripped hard on hers which lay in he held her to him long and closely and tenderly, as though their embrace—so utterly mutual—should give new strength and courage to both of them.

"God bless you, darling!" answered Lady Aylesbeare, as at last he tore himself away from her.

"Amen!" said her husband, softly, as the door closed upon him. Half an hour later—quiet, apparently impassive, and outwardly altogether normal—he had taken his seat on the Bench.

"Put up Charles Edward Carbutt!" said the Clerk of Assize from his place just in front of Sir Francis.

The warders obeyed promptly. The prisoner entered the dock, and as he did so

it. They remained motionless for a long time, both looking across the shaven, moon-blanched lawn at the beautiful mullioned windows of that old Palace which they had so hoped to make more beautiful with peaceful human happiness. Then, with a sob, the Judge rose, and his wife rose with him, and a broken man and woman passed through the Close and across the High Street to those Queen Anne rooms in which, for a couple of centuries, Belboro had lodged such Judges as came upon Assize to the old town.

A thrill of horror rushed through the Judge as he exchanged looks with the prisoner.

IT was characteristic of the great lawyer that he breakfasted substantially—though every mouthful was an effort—knowing that the day which lay before him must make the fiercest calls on his vitality and that he would need all his staying-power if he was to last at concert-pitch till nightfall.

Then he went up to his wife's bedroom.

"Morituras te saluto!" he whispered, as

the last, lingering—and, indeed, secretly strong—hope that this man might prove to have no blood connection with him left the Judge's heart and brain.

This blackmailer, whom he was presently going to sentence, was the very son whom he had so often pictured—he could surely recognize himself in Carbutt, and still more recognize one of his own brothers, and most of all Carbutt's mother. Carbutt was, indeed, the very image of that gay-grave, charming, many-sided Cornish milliner with whom he had spent that mad holiday fortnight on sheer blind impulse, thirty years ago. A

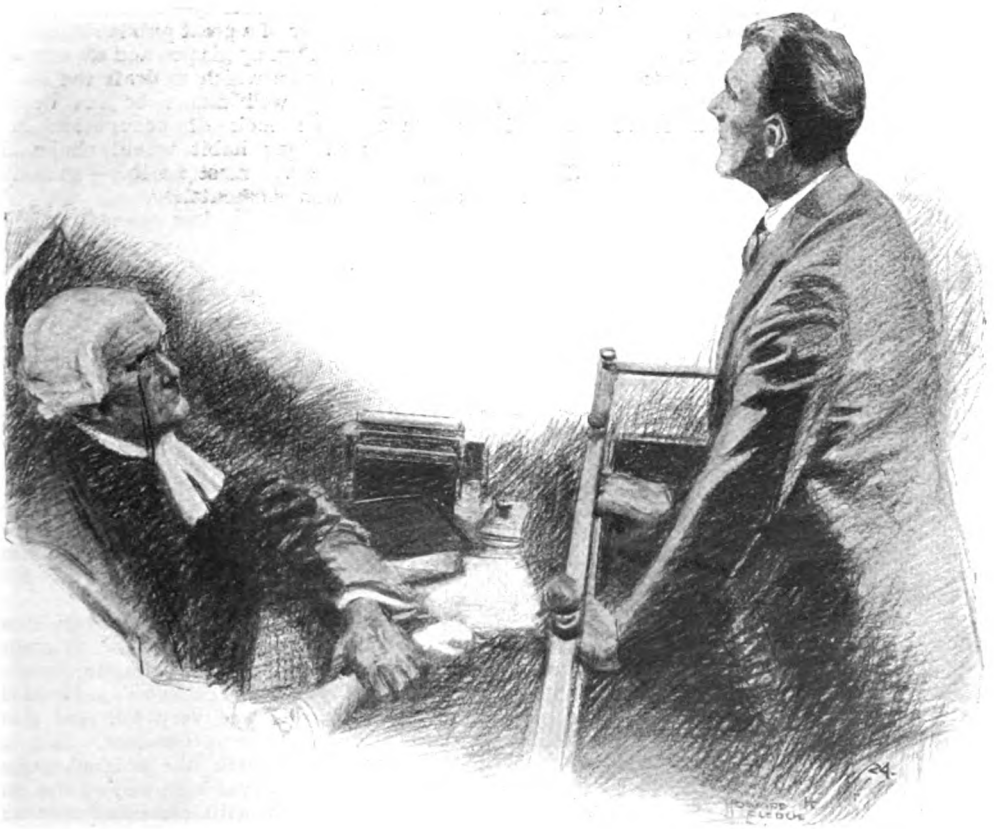
thrill of horror rushed through him as he exchanged looks with the prisoner. Would his son denounce him wildly and passionately from the dock—or were the plans of Carbutt's friends more subtle, and would they wait to strike overwhelmingly a few days later? As the jury were sworn, Francis Aylesbeare sat in Hades—and then the trial began.

As it unfolded—though Carbutt had pleaded "Not Guilty"—it became even more apparent than from the depositions that the case was of the greatest clearness against him, and one of scandalous criminality. The evidence was damning. The defence was tenuous and flimsy. When the prisoner went into the witness-box to give evidence on his own behalf, and stood there and lied and then had his falsehoods torn to shreds by the counsel for the Crown, Francis Aylesbeare, still outwardly frigid, watched him tensely, horror-stricken—his whole being tortured by sharp shame.

That he of all men, who—even in his old fighting days as a junior counsel—had always been renowned for his great rectitude and fairness, should have helped to bring such a being into the world to foul and beslime it! The thing was revolting, utterly, and it seemed to him that his own face (which men and women spoke and wrote of as such a fine one), distorted, changed, with what was worst in himself exaggerated, showed starkly, blackly evil in his son's.

The prisoner left the witness-box. When counsel had finished their speeches, Sir Francis began his summing-up.

Those who heard him said afterwards that he had surpassed his own highest watermark; never had he been more lucid, more fair, and yet so pitiless, conceding the man in the dock the maximum of doubt wherever possible and yet marking plainly the grave weight of evidence against him, and doing so with a certain contempt, as who should imply silently: "I am giving you all the rope possible, but in my heart I know you too well to be an utter scoundrel and pest of society!" It seemed to some,



also, as if he were conscious that there might be present in court friends and co-criminals of the prisoner, and that his words were addressed to them too.

"Consider your verdict!" he concluded presently, in the time-honoured phraseology of the Assize Courts. Then he leaned back in his chair, as though his duty were done and the jury's decision did not interest him—all calmness outwardly, but within ravaged and torn by a myriad fiends and devils, for not only had the climax yet to come but he was filled with remorse, choked with horror; holding the offence his own since, in the initial instance, he had brought this plague-spot into the world.

The jury filed back speedily. The Clerk asked them for their verdict, and the foreman uttered one word—"Guilty!" Sir Francis forced himself to lean forward amid the now hushed silence of the court.

"Is anything known about the prisoner's antecedents?" he asked, as a man might put a match to a powder-train.

A moment later a police inspector was standing in the witness-box.

"We know nothing definite about the prisoner's past, m'lud," he explained, "except that he comes from Australia and has long been the associate of thieves there. He has been convicted of burglary in Melbourne and Sydney, but there is no previous conviction against him in this country!"

The inspector stood down. The Clerk of Assize asked the prisoner if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed on him—and Sir Francis steeled himself to listen to a wild and passionate outburst—a fierce, malevolent indictment of himself such as should reveal everything and set all England shocked and scandalized.

It did not come, however. The prisoner merely muttered something about "mercy," and subsided. The Judge—with a final effort—leaned forward again and spoke.

"Charles Edward Carbutt," he said, "the jury have found you guilty—and in accordance with the evidence they have very rightly found you guilty—of the grave crime of blackmail, whereby you have obtained criminally considerable sums of money and have caused the greatest misery and unhappiness. I should be wanting altogether in my duty towards my fellow-citizens if I neglected to impose on you such a sentence as is commeasurable with your offence, or which would fail to deter others from following in your footsteps. Blackmail is a thing which must be put down with the firmest hand; and the sentence of the Court upon you is that you be kept in penal servitude for five years!"

HALF an hour later Aylesbeare was back at his lodgings. There his wife's face told him that her suffering had not been less than his.

"Well, Frank?" she asked, looking at him with terrible anxiety.

"A verdict of 'Guilty,'" he answered. "I have sentenced my own flesh and blood heavily—and justly sentenced him—for his crime was a perfectly abominable one!"

"And was there a scene—a demonstration?"

"None at all. He took it perfectly quietly—which makes me all the more anxious about the future. Someone powerful is probably working for him. And for that reason I am going to forestall all possible inquiry and criticism!"

"You are going to resign your Judgeship?"

"Yes, instantly. And to resign also from the executive of the 'Home.'"

"But you have been the very life and soul of it, Francis!"

"And I shall certainly be the death of what very little chance it has of reaching accomplishment if I don't sever my connection with it instantly—before I become the storm-centre of a great public scandal!"

Aylesbeare took up his pen and caught at a sheet of paper on which to draft the rough of what very well might be his death-warrant, since lack of occupation and severance of long habit would shake his system and nerves most terribly—so active and so live was his mentality.

At that moment the door opened, and the manservant entered.

"A gentleman has called and wishes to see you, m'lud!" he said.

The Judge glanced at the visiting-card. The name on it was "James Adlington," and the address was Sydney, Australia.

"Show him in!" he ordered, after a moment of hesitation. And as the servant bowed and left them he passed the card to his wife.

"But you aren't going to see him!" she said, amazedly.

"Indeed I am, my dear! My fall, I know, is inevitable, but this may be one last Heaven-sent chance of bringing down a rascally blackmailer along with me!"

Sir Francis's eyes gleamed brightly now, and with a real light of battle. His wife nodded back at him, understandingly and admiringly. Then the caller was ushered in.

The new-comer was very tall and thin, and very obviously a Colonial. But he certainly did not look like a blackmailer, and his expression was kind and of the sort usually associated with idealists. He was probably about fifty years of age.

" I have the pleasure of speaking to Sir Francis Aylesbeare ? " he said.

"That is so!" the Judge answered, calmly.

" I was in court to-day ! "

" Indeed ! "

" Yes, out of a special curiosity. I was extremely anxious to observe how a man of Sir Francis Aylesbeare's position—and reputation—would treat a prisoner named Charles Edward Carbutt, in respect of whom he last night received a typed letter ! "

" And you heard ! " The Judge's voice was infinitely quiet and contemptuous.

" Naturally. That is why I have called on you this evening ! "

The visitor paused. He looked from husband to wife and from wife to husband and back again ; and his face showed nothing but intense admiration.

" Yes, I am here for several reasons," he pursued, presently. " The first is, to tell you that the man you so rightly sentenced to-day to five years' imprisonment was not Charles Edward Carbutt, your natural son by Nancy Carbutt, but a man who amazingly resembled him and who caused a heap of trouble in Australia, where he personated your son and defrauded people on the strength of the likeness (having also Cornish ancestry) till the country got too hot for his liking and he came to carry on his dirty tricks in Great Britain. The second reason of my visit is to apologize for leaving that typed letter here last night and temporarily upsetting you ! "

" You mean to say that you did it deliberately and in cold blood ! " It was Lady Aylesbeare who flashed out the sentence at the tall Australian.

" Yes. But please hear everything before you condemn me altogether. I am a sheep farmer, and one of the richest men in my own country, and I am the son of a poor barrister of great promise who all but made good bigly and then fell ill and died in great poverty—as did my mother also ! "

" But I don't see what that has to do with your being guilty of such a heart-rending hoax—if, indeed, you are speaking the truth at all to me ! "

" Perhaps not—yet—Sir Francis ! But men don't make fortunes in New South Wales without having a few shocks and set-backs and learning to be a bit suspicious of human nature. And I wanted to make sure whether or no you were a single-minded man or a self-seeking one, out for advertisement and a peerage under the guise of altruism and philanthropy—for I had read in all the papers how you were moving all you knew to get the money for that ' Home ' of yours. So I just tried you in the furnace (having seen in the papers that the false Carbutt was coming before you, and having known the real one intimately and having heard all his confidences). I watched you in court pretty closely, Sir Francis. I saw what you were going through, and I realized that you were indeed the man you pretended to be and that you could be wholly and thoroughly trusted ! "

" That is very good of you ! " The Judge's voice was hard now, and exceedingly ironic. " But I still fail to see why you did a thing so dastardly ! "

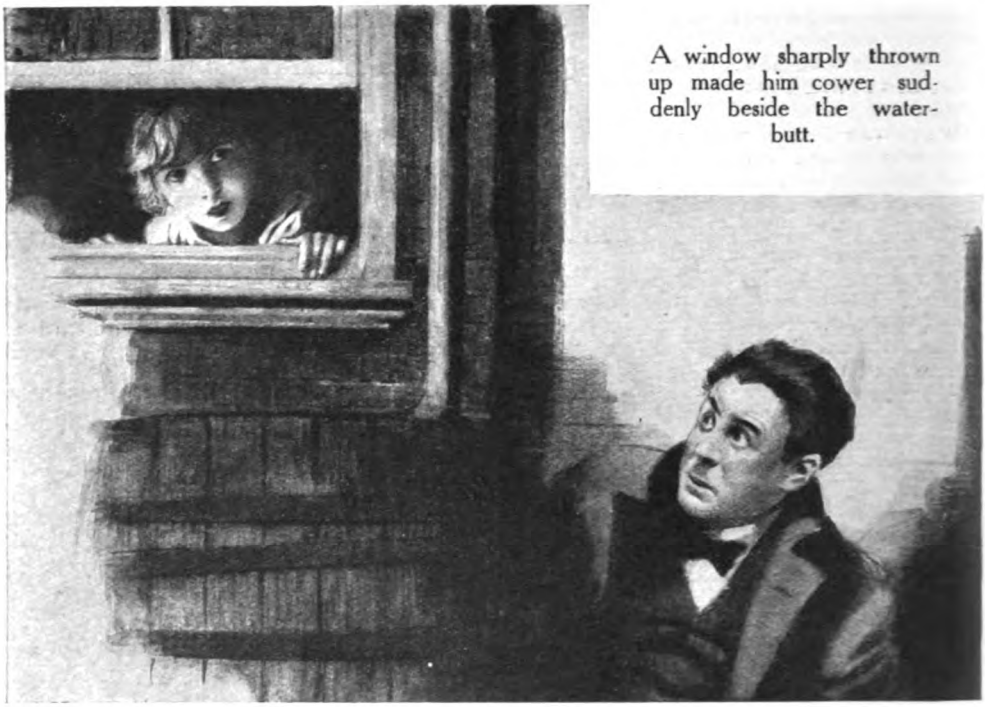
The Colonial smiled faintly. Then he took out his pocket-book and extracted from it a small piece of paper.

" Perhaps it *is* dastardly to make a man suffer Hell before one parts with money to him for a charity ! " he agreed, almost as though soliloquizing. " But maybe you will nevertheless accept this small donation to your ' Home ' in memory of my father, George Adlington, who was head of the school at Malvern when you were a fag, Sir Francis —as I expect you will readily remember. I will now wish you good evening. You must be dead tired—and I am truly sorry for it !—after all the mental strain which you have gone through since I sent you up that little typed note last evening ! "

The Australian caught up his hat and was gone like a flash, while Sir Francis stood too staggered to stay him. It was, indeed, Lady Aylesbeare who first recovered her poise and picked up the slip of paper which the visitor had dropped upon the table.

She unfolded it, glanced at it, gave a gasp, after that a little cry—and then held it out before her husband.

It was a cheque for fifty thousand pounds !



A window sharply thrown up made him cower suddenly beside the water-butt.

"THE WONDERFUL CHEAP SHOP"

BY

REGINALD BERKELEY, M.P.

(Author of "French Leave," etc.)

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

IT is pleasant—it is more, it is exhilarating—to be possessed of a romantic temperament. The most fleeting glance, the lightest word, becomes fraught with meaning; every step in the day's march leads adventure-wards; every chance encounter threatens to plunge one into a whirlpool of amiable experiences; elves and fairies mock one in the byways and cry out to be pursued; the whole animate world seems banded together to lead one dancing after Jack o' Lanterns. And especially fruitful is that season when the magic of dim yellow lights has cast an air of mystery over the streets of great cities.

Marmaduke Baxter Clynes was a large romantic man. He was good-temperedly fat. He had a sensitive and humorous mouth, high cheek-bones, small twinkling eyes, and a tangled mop of red hair which he habitually tortured into the semblance of a disreputable coco-nut husk by passing his fingers backwards and forwards through it. He wore no hat at any time. Certain hours in the day claimed him vaguely "in the City," but why specify that? His calling does not greatly concern us. He dabbled in his spare time in the collection and sale of works of art, for he had a small independence. But although something of a connoisseur, he was no business man when it came to a deal; and if his pocket greatly benefited by his occasional incursions into the realms of salesmanship

the fact escaped the notice alike of himself and of his banker.

It happened that on a certain Tuesday afternoon in November Marmaduke, who was cataloguing some recent purchases, began suddenly to experience the indefinable craving that customarily announced an attack of his romantic malady. It was an evening of glamour. The light film of fog over London just served to throw a kind of fantasy upon the streets. To stew indoors over a fire was what no man of temperament could endure. Out there in the byways was drama under a thousand disguises; love mocking the demure and inviting the hardy; avarice snarling over its gold; poverty expiring for want of it; nobility and sacrifice, beastliness, shame.

The stage of life stood set and lighted for Marmaduke Baxter Clynes. He muffled himself in a coat and plunged out of doors.

He drifted aimlessly along, now glancing shyly at a passing girl, now with mild envy at something in a shop window. But no impulse stirred him until he had wandered into a street wholly unknown to him, when unaccountably he stopped and found himself staring at a sign which said:—

N. Abottomey.

EHT LUFREDNOW PAEHC POHS,

a legend which moved him to the depths of his nature. Without a glance at the contents of the windows, he pushed open the door and walked in.

The shop was dimly lit with gas-light, which feebly illuminated a miscellany of objects almost impossible to describe. He paused for a moment and then, in response to an inner call, threaded his way gingerly between ottomans, Chesterfield couches, dumb-waiters, suits of armour, grandfather clocks, talboys, chests of drawers, and piles of crockery to the farther end, where in a corner he found a small door giving on to a steep and narrow staircase. Unhesitatingly he began to climb. On the unlit landing he paused again for the least fraction of time, and then, perceiving a door on his right, he deliberately opened it.

The occupant of the room, a woman, gave a sigh of relief on seeing his figure looming in the doorway.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "thank goodness you've come at last! Have you brought your things?"

The music of her voice thrilled him like the throb of a lute.

"I have everything I need," he replied, calmly, masking his amazement at her greeting.

"Well, come up and get to work," she said, walking past him into the passage. "Father will be back pretty soon, and if he were to return first—my God!" He sensed her shudder in spite of the darkness, and, smothering a fear-inspired desire to bolt out of the house, murmured, "After you."

She led the way along the landing past another and larger staircase, then up a few steps, down a short passage, and stopped opposite a door.

"The broken pipe is in here," she said. "It only wants a bit of solder, I think. Have you a match?"

"Alas," said Marmaduke, untruthfully, "I have not."

"Well, you can't see to work in this pitch dark," said the lady, sharply. "I don't know what the good of a man is if he doesn't carry matches. Don't you smoke?"

"No," said Clynes, humbly; "I chew."

"Disgusting!" she exclaimed. "I suppose I must get a light for you. Wait here."

Wherewith she turned and hurried back.

Marmaduke Baxter Clynes was essentially on these occasions a creature of impulse, and never had he experienced a stronger impulse than that which now summoned him to slink away out of the house before his imposture was discovered. But, on the other hand, he was deeply intrigued by the problem of the broken pipe. He cautiously opened the door and recoiled in disgust before an overpowering smell of liquor. His gorge rose at the incredible stench. And hard upon the heels of his find came the thought of a drunken brawl—perhaps a murder—the lady a decoy—the house a garrotter's den—robbery. Almost before this had passed through his head he was stealing down the passage with a thumping heart, intent only on getting away from the place undiscovered.

It was an amazingly rambling house, built apparently just as the fancy had taken the builder. A friendly recess in the passage afforded him cover when he saw the light approaching, and as soon as it had disappeared in the direction of the room he slipped out, scuttled to the second staircase, tiptoed down it, opened the door, and found himself in a flag-paved yard. Here for a moment despair crushed him. The walls were high and, for all he knew, fortified with broken glass; the door to the street was locked; and he was now hopelessly compromised with the people of the house. If he had remained where he was told to remain, he might perhaps have explained away his presence as a mistake; but now, if he should be traced, nothing, he felt, could save him from the police-court (if the inhabitants of the house were honest), or from the knife and the oubliette (if they

were not). The recollection of the abominable reek of spirits affected him with ventral perturbation—he crawled about like a large and restless cat, seeking an egress.

A window sharply thrown up above made him cower suddenly down beside the water-butt. He pictured the disdainful woman searching every inch of the yard with her disdainful eyes; then he was a little reassured by the sound of the window being shut, and a moment later by the pulling down of the blind. In the excess of his relief he leaned heavily against the water-butt, almost overbalancing it; and, with the first faint rekindling of hope, realized that it was empty. To drag it away from the water-pipe was simple; then he gingerly rolled it to the wall, climbed upon it, and, a moment later, was standing in the road with his troubles behind him. For there was no broken glass.

Then it was that the day-spring of romance in Marmaduke's nature welled up and overflowed. Ninety-nine adventurers out of a hundred, after such an experience, would have put the width of London between them and their exploit without a second thought; not so Marmaduke. No sooner was he free, with his fears behind him, than he was possessed by an overmastering desire to probe the matter to the depths. He hurried away down the road, and within five minutes he was once more standing before the sign:

N. Abottomey.

EHT LUFREDNOW PAEHC POHS

(a legend which doubtless the reader has by now interpreted as "The Wonderful Cheap Shop").

He halted outside, not very clear in his mind what to do next. He wanted to see the girl again; he wanted to solve the mystery of the house; yet he could not go up a second time and look for her; whilst to remain in front of the shop door until she came out had obvious disadvantages. He gazed for inspiration amongst the bric-à-brac in the window, and his eye was held by a loathsome china figure with an electric lamp attachment growing out of its head. Turning from it in disgust, he perceived for the first time a bell-push on the door with a brass plate inviting him to ring. He rang and walked in. A moment later he found himself threading his way once more, through the ottomans and grandfather clocks, towards a tall, graceful girl who had appeared from the side staircase in response to the bell.

Marmaduke Baxter Clynes has been described as a person of impulsive and romantic temperament. He believed implicitly in love at first sight, and at the sight of her the conviction rushed upon him that his peace of mind was gone for ever. Tentatively he apologized for disturbing her.

She murmured something in reply, he knew not what, for her voice was the enslaving voice which had melted his marrow earlier in the evening, and Marmaduke's head began to swim.

"Much regret to trouble you," he mumbled in confusion. "A collector of china figures—yes—the small Cupid in your window there—with the electric thingummy—er——" His speech tailed away miserably.

"You want to look at it?" she said, regarding him steadily. "Certainly. I'll get it for you."

Whilst she was so engaged, a dreadful inability to think seized the unhappy Clynes. He could not imagine what to do or say next, and whilst thus tongue-tied he bought and paid for the image and tucked it in a brown-paper parcel under his arm.

"Is there anything else?" she inquired.

"There is," he replied, weightily, determined that he would not leave her without a struggle to express his feelings. "Though what it is," he was compelled to add lamely, "I cannot for the moment determine."

"Have you been drinking?" said the young lady, severely.

The injustice of this suspicion, coming as it did from one who was at least associated with the deathly reek of alcohol which he had discovered in the closed room, almost overpowered him.

"Indeed I have not," he cried with warmth, "and, let me add, it ill becomes an inhabitant of this house——" He checked himself as the shop door opened and a little dirty man with a drooping black moustache and rosy cheeks came in briskly, followed by a thin, saturnine, bearded fellow, whose coat was buttoned up to his chin.

The girl immediately left Marmaduke and hurried to meet them.

"Father," he heard her say, in a tone of apprehension. "Oh, I hope you won't be angry——" The rest was inaudible; but the little rosy-cheeked man grew redder and redder in the face as the narrative proceeded. Finally he shook his fist in the air.

"Oh, you senseless little fool!" he raved at the girl. "My God, what idiots women can be! Here, Sanderson"—he addressed his companion—"come and let's see what to do." They hurried up the staircase, leaving the girl white-faced and trembling. The sight of her emotion smote Marmaduke like an arrow through his liver.

"Oh, Miss Abottomey," he cried—"for that I conclude is your name—can I help

you in any way?—I would, indeed—oh, believe me——"

"It is not my name," she replied, hotly; "that rude old creature is only my stepfather."

"But may I help?" he babbled.

"I don't see how you can," she answered. "And why should you, anyhow?"

"I would do anything," he assured her earnestly. "Oh, Miss—— What is your name, then?"

"Selkirk," she said. "Nora Selkirk."

"Divine name," he murmured. "Oh, Miss Nora Selkirk, I implore you to take me into your confidence and let me help you. Tell me what is the matter."

"Really!" she said, nervously, and then: "Oh, well, if you'd like to know. There's a room father always keeps locked. I had nothing much to do this afternoon and happened to try the door as I was passing. It was unlocked for once, and I went in and found a whole lot of funny-shaped copper pipes and things. I was trying to make out what they were and I managed to break the join of two pipes. Oh, it was awful!"

"It must have been," he said, sympathetically.

"I couldn't think what to do," she continued. "I sent to the plumber and told him to send his man. He sent one at last—it was pitch-dark—an extraordinary man with no hat and no matches, and, for all I know, no tools——" She broke off and looked at him suspiciously. "Oh," she cried, "I do believe you're the man!" and as he stood dumbfounded, "You *are*!" she cried. "Why on earth did you run away when I went for the light? Oh," she added, furiously, "you've got me into such a row."

Never before had Marmaduke Baxter Clynes felt so complete a fool.

"Miss Selkirk," he said, earnestly, "although I admit appearances are against me, do accept my explanation. I am no plumber. I have never been a plumber."

She gazed wide-eyed at him.

"Then how did you come up to my room?"

"Get out!" he cried. "I'm sick of the sight of you. And as for you——!" he said, in a menacing tone, to the girl.

"Oh, Lord," he cried, "it's too long a story. It would take me an hour to tell you. I—I had to come."

"But why?" she asked.

"Because," he stammered, "because—— Oh, I don't know! An impulse directed my feet. You were, so to speak, calling to me——"

"Indeed, no!" she interrupted. "Never! A man who chews tobacco!"

"I don't," he pleaded. "I never have."

"But you told me——"

"It was a lie," he confessed. "It was all lies except that I would follow you to the farthest ends of the earth."

"Oh," she said, unsteadily, "what do you mean? You'd better go! I think you'd better go—you're frightening me."

"Don't say that!" pleaded Marmaduke, and would have added more, but the little dirty man reappeared suddenly at the staircase entrance, with rage in every lineament of his countenance.

"Haven't you finished your infernal purchases yet?" he screamed at Marmaduke; and before the latter had time to reply,

"Well, get out," he cried. "I'm sick of the sight of you. And as for you——!" he said, in a menacing tone, to the girl.

"How dare you speak to her like that?" cried Clynes.

"Oh, please," said the girl, "leave him alone!"

"I will not, indeed," cried Marmaduke, indignantly. "No man shall speak like that to a woman in my presence."

"Your presence!" sneered Mr. Abottomey. "Who do you think gives a damn for your presence?"

"You will before I've done with you," replied Clynes, "if I have to call on the police for help." He paused, and added, grimly: "You're not the only thing in this house the police would be interested to see, I'm thinking!"

This shot, more or less in the dark, reacted powerfully upon the other. He turned pale and faced the girl.

"You wretched woman!" he shrieked; "if you've blabbed——"

"Shut up!" said Clynes, furiously, "or I'll have them in now. I will! Stand away from her, I tell you!"

The effect of this threat on Mr. Abottomey was magical. He drew away, livid with rage, glared at Marmaduke as though he meditated murder, and then, after a malevolent glance at Nora, who, petrified by the turn events had taken, could only stare blankly from one to the other of the men, took himself off up the stairway, spitting out the most horrid oaths as he went.

"Oh!" cried Nora, hysterically, when he had gone. "What does all this mean? And what right," she demanded, growing angry, "have you to threaten my stepfather with the police?"

Marmaduke Baxter Clynes became almost melodramatic.

"The right every man has to protect a woman," he replied.

"Thanks, I can look after myself," she said, icily. "But you talked about something in this house——" She broke off on a note of apprehension.

"I did," he replied, "but only to save you."

She made a gesture of deprecation.

"Please leave me out of it. What did you refer to?"

"The still," he faltered.

"The what?"

"The still—in the room upstairs—what you broke. It's an illicit still, you know."

She staggered against the counter.

"In this house?" she gasped.

"Certainly. But——"

"Oh, gracious heavens, what have I done?" she cried. "He'll never forgive me. Oh, go away, go away!" She was becoming incoherent.

"Of course, I'll never tell a soul," he vowed. "I wouldn't dream of it. I——"

"Oh, go away!" she wailed, and fled upstairs, leaving him open-mouthed and alone in the shop.

HE waited for some ten minutes, but as no sound came from above he walked away in a frenzy of amazement and despair. He strode swiftly along with his head in the air, furiously musing upon the ingratitude of womankind, till a feeling of stiffness in his left arm reminded him of the parcel he was carrying under it, and he obtained a momentary relief to his feelings by pausing and smashing his hideous purchase against a wall. Then he plunged on into the night as swiftly as before, until in the midst of his fury a thought smote him like a touch of hot iron. He had left Nora, entirely unprotected, to the tender mercies of her stepfather and the saturnine Sanderson. By now anything might have happened. She might have been beaten. Her murdered corpse—— In the flash of the idea he turned in his tracks and hurried back again.

When he reached the shop he found it closed and the place in darkness. He walked up and down for a few minutes, uncertain what to do; then, remembering the friendly water-butt, he scurried away to the back of the house. From the street side he was just able to reach the top of the wall by springing into the air, and after a struggle succeeded in swinging himself up. He descended by the aid of the water-butt, quite noiselessly, and crept to the door (which was still unlocked); then, summoning all his courage, he opened it, and began softly to ascend the stairs. At the top he paused a moment, listening; next he tip-toed along the passage to a friendly recess in the wall similar to the one which had screened him before. This was provided with a curtain, behind which he felt fairly safe for the moment, but his final destination was the shop, where he knew he could defy detection amongst the second-hand furniture.

He waited for some minutes, listening intently, and then, as he could neither see nor hear anything, he began to think that he had perhaps judged Mr. Abottomey and his bearded companion a little hastily. He was almost regretting his return, when the opening of a door cast a beam of light down the passage, and he heard a grim voice say:—

"That settles her."

"It won't happen again in a hurry" said another voice.

"She's fixed," said the first.

The blood ran cold in the veins of Marmaduke Baxter Clynes. This grisly conversation, he felt, could only refer to Nora. In what horrible manner she had been "fixed" by the illicit distillers he trembled to imagine. His hair rose and the sweat stood out on his forehead as he struggled to determine what to do. He heard the shutting of a door; a light began to move along the passage towards him; and he heard the heavy tread of the two men. Then his heart stood quite still for a perceptible space of time, for the footsteps halted directly opposite his curtain, and a puzzled voice exclaimed :—

"Well, hang me, how did them boots get *there?*"

Marmaduke could stand it no longer. He realized that the boots were his own, projecting underneath the curtain, and the necessity for instant action galvanized him. He swept aside the curtain, sprang out, smote the saturnine Sanderson squarely between the eyes, brushed past Mr. Abottomey, and headed for the stairs to the shop, shouting "Police!" as he ran. He reached the shop, but who could have navigated it in that blackness? Before he had taken a dozen steps he tripped; a cabinet came to the ground with him; he landed on a pile of brass basins and Chinese images; in the floundering struggle to regain his feet his frenzied hands clutched down a tapestry curtain, the supporting rod of which, thus violently detached at one end, pivoted on the other and shattered a cut-glass chandelier, covering him with fragments. Setting his teeth and glaring into the inky murk of the shop, he plunged his right foot into an antique copper coal-scuttle, and found himself unable to withdraw it. In a convulsive effort to free himself he trod with his left on a pile of dessert plates which slid instantaneously from under him. With a yell of despair his courage left him. He staggered; he collapsed backwards; and, as he fell, a suit of armour, a case of stuffed birds, and a perfect tornado of crockery descended and overwhelmed him.

WHEN his senses returned, after what seemed a lapse of years, he found himself still in darkness, and still lying prone. His limbs felt as though they were broken—they ached so abominably. His eyes were bandaged. His right arm was strapped to his side. His left arm, though free, had no special resilience. He wondered what had happened. Where was he? There was something moving stealthily about the room. The prickling of his scalp and an outburst of clammy perspiration threatened him with a return of his former terrors. He started up with a shriek. Restraining hands caught firmly at his shoulders. His legs, swathed in some clinging material, refused to perform their normal functions. His plunges succeeded in dislodging a stone hot-water bottle, which fell to the floor with an astonishing noise. Another reverberating crash unmistakably told of the fate of a tray of provender. A whirlwind sweep of his free arm violently overset a small table piled with books. But in the course of his frenzied struggles he had displaced part of the bandage from his left eye; and suddenly he subsided and lay still. For he found himself tucked up in a strange bed, surrounded by the *débris* of invalid comforts, and subjected to the rather exasperated scrutiny of Miss Nora Selkirk. Shamefacedly he tried to sit up for the purpose of apology. She waved him back.

"You've broken quite enough," she observed, with severity. And then, try to preserve her countenance as she would, a laugh broke through.

"Poor Mr. Sanderson's face!" she giggled. "Whatever made you do it?"

"Nora," he replied, simply, "I thought you were in danger, and I came back. And when I heard one of them say 'She's fixed,' I made sure it was you. I suppose it was that infernal still they meant. I see I was a fool. But I did it because I love you. Will you forgive me?"

"I?" she replied. "I've nothing to forgive. I can't help it if people go crazy and behave like a madhouse!"

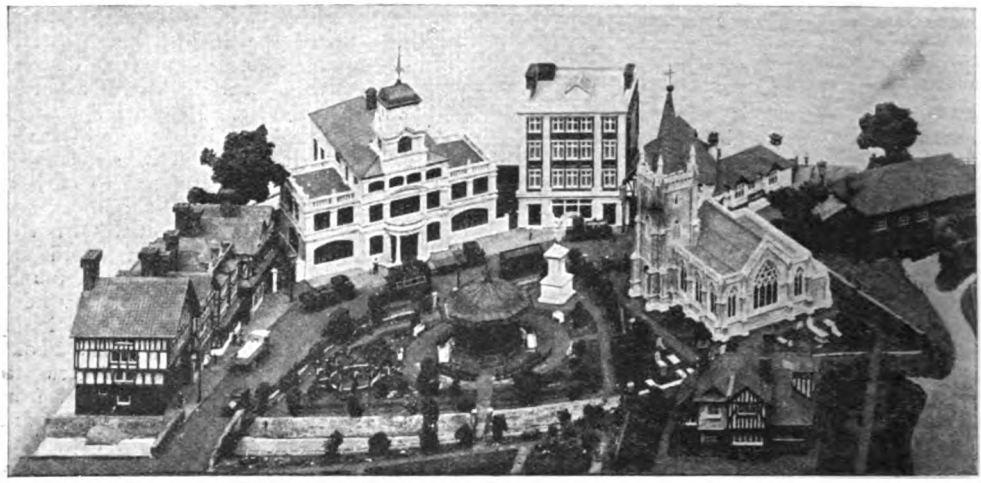
But something in her expression gave him courage. He seized her hands and drew her towards him.

WHEN Mr. Abottomey joined them an hour later he evinced no surprise at their preoccupation. His feelings were adequately expressed when he remarked later to Mr. Sanderson :—

"Better to keep it in the family, I s'pose—but I'd like to know who's to pay for all them breakages."

To which Mr. Sanderson brilliantly replied :—

"Give 'em the receipted bill for a weddin' present."



MODELS

How They are Made and How They are Used.

THE picturesque little country town shown at the top of these pages is not all that it seems. Instead of being situated, as one might expect to find it, in some sheltered valley of the English countryside, it rests in a glass case in an office in Gray's Inn Road, London. Its area is measured not in acres, but in square feet, and even the tallest factory chimney is not so high as a man's knee. Yet so complete and perfect are its diminutive details that it is easy to understand why the camera appears, for once, to have relinquished its reputation for veracity.

"People do not realize what an important part models play in human affairs."

The maker of this remarkable Lilliputian town, Mr. John B. Thorp, has been building models for over forty years, and this particular collection has been assembled as representative of the infinite variety of work that he produces.

Although his work has appeared at many exhibitions—twenty of his models were recently on show at Wembley, and his reproductions of Old London, originally a popular feature of the Franco-British Exhibition, are now permanently installed in the London Museum—most of the miniature houses, factories, churches, and other buildings which are turned out in his workshop are never seen by the general public. Indeed, they are constructed to serve sternly practical purposes of which the layman is seldom aware.

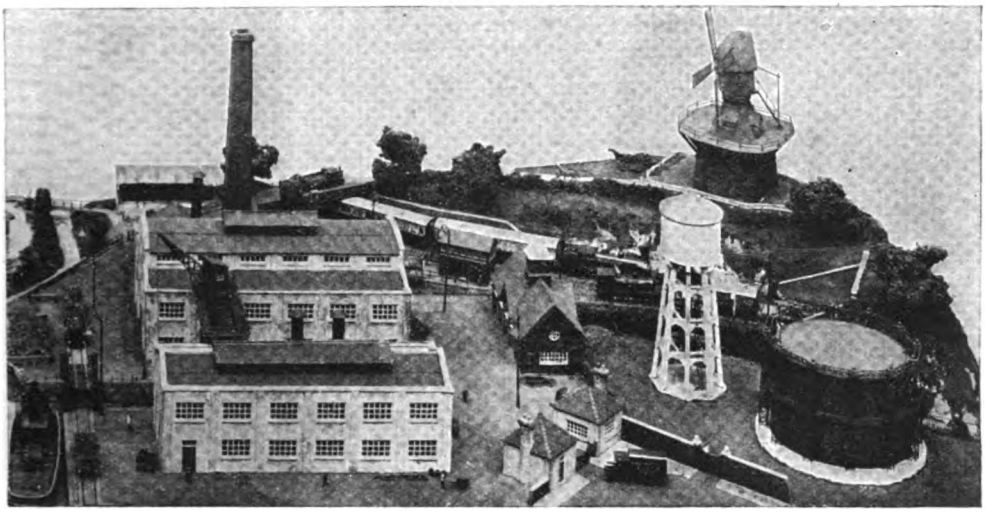
"Most people are apt to regard these little buildings as nothing more than fascinating ornaments or toys," said Mr. Thorp. "They do not realize what an important part models play in human affairs. Yet, as you will probably remember, in a recent criminal trial a man's life depended largely upon the model of a bungalow which was produced in court so that the jury might understand the evidence."

"And have many of your models been the means of deciding the fate of a man on trial?" I asked.

"Some of them," was the reply. "Of course, the application of models to criminal cases is necessarily limited. On the other hand, I have made hundreds for various forms of litigation."

Mr. Thorp handed me a motor van no larger than a match-box. I examined it closely, and was astonished to find a wealth of detail in the workmanship. Among other things I observed that the front wheels were actually steerable, and the wind-screen was made of real glass.

"That van," explained Mr. Thorp, "was



employed to settle a dispute with regard to liability for injuries and damage resulting from a street accident. From careful measurements and photographs taken on the spot I made a scale model of the scene of the accident, together with movable models of the two vehicles involved—the van and a large lorry. In cases of this description arguments sometimes arise as to whether the driver of one vehicle could have seen the other coming, or whether he could have turned aside in time to avoid a collision—hence my attention to the details of the car. In this particular instance, however, the controversy centred upon another part of the model. One of the principal witnesses contended that the motor lorry had been on the wrong side of the road when the collision had occurred. The cross-examining counsel asked him to place the vehicles in the exact position in which he said he had seen them at the time of the accident. He did so. Counsel then asked him to indicate the spot on which he was standing at the moment of impact. Witness hesitated for a moment and then laid his finger on a certain spot.

"'You are quite sure that is where you stood?' asked counsel.

"'Quite,' answered the witness.

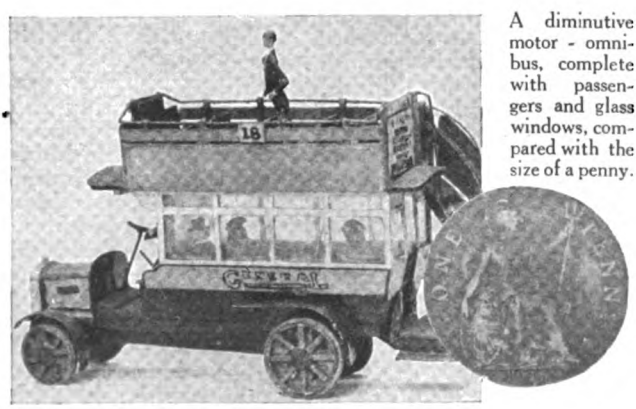
"'Now, gentlemen,' said the lawyer, turning to the jury and producing a model figure from his pocket, 'this little figure is made accurately to the scale of the model, and represents the exact height of the witness. If you will stand in the position indicated and look at the model from the eye-level of the figure you will find that the hedge on the roadside would have completely obstructed witness's view of the accident, had it occurred as he has just described it!'

"The cleverness of this barrister, aided by the model—which, of course, had been formally entered and accepted as evidence—saved his clients many hundreds of pounds."

"The accuracy of a model, then, is of the utmost importance?" I suggested.

"Most assuredly," was the reply. "Indeed, to make an incorrect model for a law case would practically amount to perjury. Which reminds me. Not long ago a lawyer who was conducting the defence in an accident case brought me plans and photographs and instructed me to make a model. When the work was finished he called at my office to see the result. He examined the model for a few minutes and then suddenly ejaculated, 'Good heavens! This won't do—this won't do at all.'

"'Why?' I asked. 'Isn't it accurate?'



A diminutive motor-omnibus, complete with passengers and glass windows, compared with the size of a penny.

" ' Accurate ? ' he said. ' It's too darned accurate. I should lose my case if I took that into court.'

" He paid me for the work done, but when the case was heard he introduced drawings in place of the model—and *won the day !*

" Lord Darling once paid me what I regarded as a very neat compliment in connection with a model I made for an accident case in which Sir E. Marshall-Hall was for the defence. The details of the case were extremely involved and the evidence became more and more confusing until counsel asked permission to bring the model into court. When this was produced, the judge—then Mr. Justice Darling—stood up in his seat and leaned over the bench to obtain a better view of the model. Then with a gentle smile of satisfaction he sat down again.

" ' *Now* I can understand what you have all been talking about for the last half-hour,' he said, dryly.

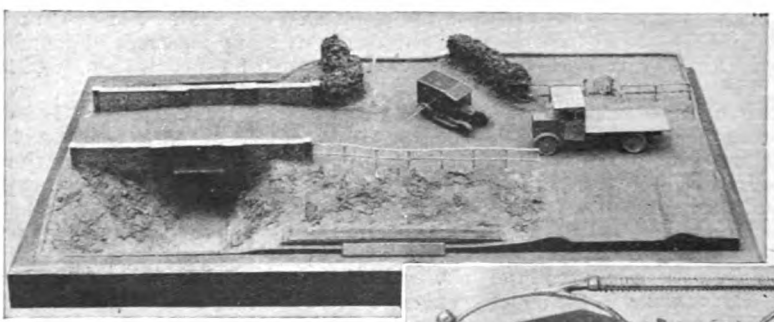
" Another important use for models is to help architects to see exactly what their designs would produce when carried into execution. Frequently defects exist in the plans which are not apparent until the building is finished—but the construction of a model enables the architect to ' look before he leaps.'

" For instance, a well-known architect recently sent me plans of a magnificent building in which there were two staircases. I made a model from his drawings, and as soon as I put the staircases into the building I discovered that at one point there was not enough head room, and it was evident that people passing up and down stairs would have bumped their heads against the ceiling ! Yet it was extremely difficult to detect this error in the plans.

"A building is not like a drawing or painting : you can't rub it out and do it again—unless you are willing to throw away hundreds of pounds on alterations. Yet, however carefully an architect may draw his plans, he can never visualize exactly how a building will look from all angles. When it was decided that the Nottingham war memorial should take the form of an entrance gate to the park which had been presented to the town by Sir Jesse Boot, the council discussed the architect's plans for nearly two years, on and off, without being able to arrive at a decision. Then I was called in to make a model, with the result that the matter was settled in a few weeks."

" You appear to be a stickler for realism and minuteness of detail," I remarked, as I examined the model in question. " Is this altogether necessary ? "

" Well," replied Mr. Thorp, " when people order a model of this description they want to see exactly how the finished structure will look—a rough idea is not sufficient. When the architect told me that the gate in the centre archway was to be made of wrought iron I knew that I could obtain the correct effect on the model only by employing similar materials. Although the miniature gate is not quite four inches high, the whole thing was constructed by hand, the metal being shaped and soldered together piece by piece. It took several days to make that gate alone, but don't you think it was worth it ? "

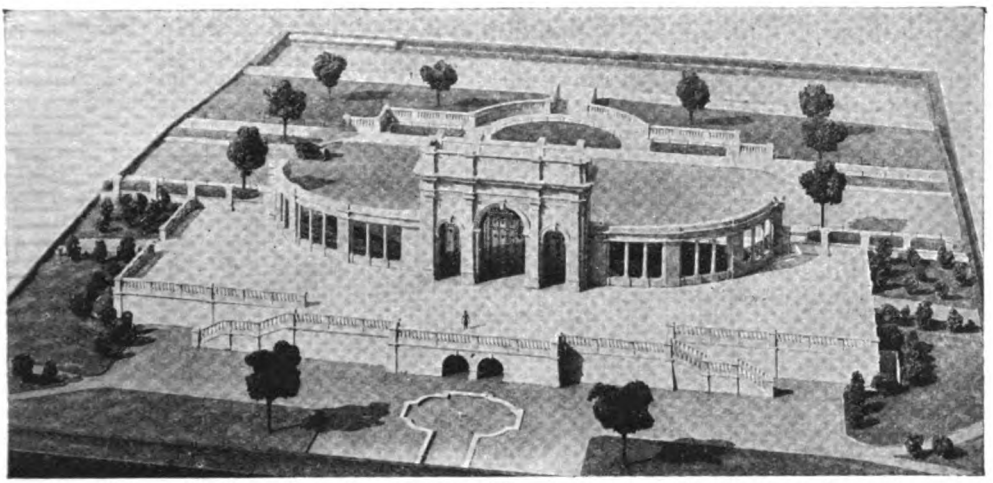


One of the many models made for production in court in connection with street accident claims. The size of the motor van may be gauged from the photograph inset. The miniature figure and bedstead seen on the right were made for the model of a proposed hospital.

Mr. Thorp looked at me challengingly.

" Besides," he added, suddenly deciding to tell the whole truth, " I rather enjoy doing this sort of work."

" It has not lost its fascination, despite the fact that you have been at it for over forty years ? " I said.



A realistic model of the Nottingham war memorial made from the architect's plans before work was commenced on the actual structure.

"Longer," he replied. "I have been making models ever since I was a schoolboy, and I am now sixty-two. When I was at Christ's Hospital—the old 'Bluecoat School,' where I was educated—I built a model town of cardboard, and I used to charge my schoolmates the sum of 'one pin' to view it. After I left school I qualified as an architect, and from the commencement of my professional career I used models as an aid to designing. Other architects asked me to make similar models for them, and so the present business grew."

I was still handling the miniature wrought-iron gate.

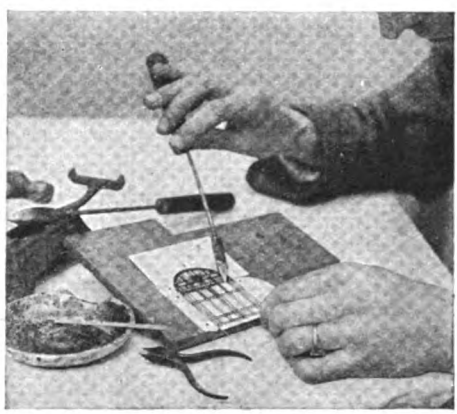
"Surely this delicate detail work must be a great strain upon the eyesight?" I commented. "But then I suppose you use a watchmaker's eyeglass?"

"Never used one in my life," was the reply. "In fact, we haven't got one in the place. All the work is done with the naked eye. Come downstairs into the workshop and you can see for yourself."

I accepted the invitation eagerly, and was conducted into a large, airy, well-lit building where quite a large number of men were busily employed.

"I had no idea that your place would be such a hive of industry," I shouted, amidst the hum of machinery and the tapping of hammers.

"Well," Mr. Thorp shouted back, "ours is what you might call a paradoxical profession—we make small-scale models on a large scale." Then he smiled—it was a remarkably boyish smile for a man of sixty-two—and added with a chuckle: "I must make a note of that. I may be able to use it again."



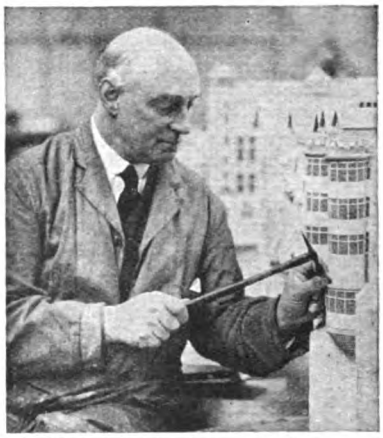
Making the centre gateway of the above model. A delicate example of wrought metal work.

I was surprised, too, to observe that the principal materials employed in making the majority of the model buildings were wood—good solid pine—and cardboard. Somehow I had expected them to be made of plaster of Paris or some kind of modelling composition. I asked Mr. Thorp the reason for making them so substantial.

"Well," he said, "this is the most practical way of constructing them. When you are working from plans you are bound to build up piece by piece, and very often there has to be quite as much detail in the interior of a building as on the outside. In other words, an architect's model-maker is a builder in miniature—not a sculptor.

"Look at this model of Old London Bridge, which I am making in my spare time. It is one of the biggest jobs I have ever undertaken—much larger than the existing model

in the London Museum—and it is intended to be permanent. The windows are of real glass, for the interiors of the buildings will be illuminated ; and the 'weather-boarding,' made of cardboard, is carefully laid on piece by piece and tacked down. I might have obtained a fairly realistic effect by shading, but I prefer to do it thoroughly whilst I am about it. Then it must be remembered that some of these models have to stand a good deal of banging about in the course of transit. Look at this little house here. It doesn't appear very solid, perhaps, but in proportion to its size it is infinitely more substantial than a real house would be. As I will show you presently, a person of average weight can stand on it without doing the slightest damage. Of course, the roof is rather strong as compared with that of a real house, but otherwise everything is exactly to scale. Those window-sills, for example, are constructed of wood, planed down to the thickness of one-sixteenth of an inch.



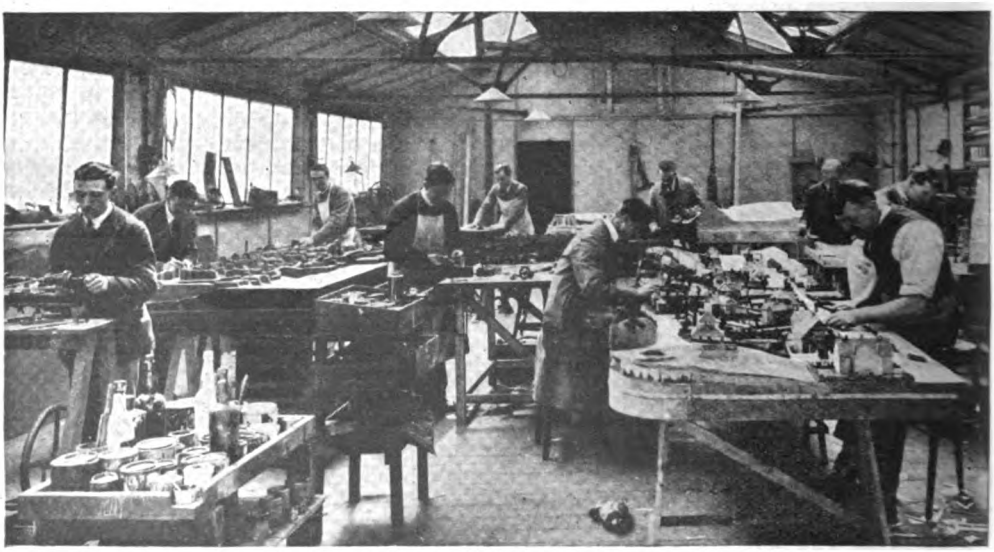
Mr. John B. Thorp, who is an authority on Old London, at work on a part of a large model of Old London Bridge which he intends to exhibit shortly.

"I have been asked to make models for all kinds of strange purposes. Not long ago a famous American film producer visited this country to obtain 'local colour' for a picture he was making which included a number of English scenes of an historical nature. He intended to return with photographs and drawings of the various castles and other ancient buildings he wished to reproduce, and have replicas of them erected with laths and plaster in his studio. But when he happened to see some of my work at Wembley it occurred to him that models would be infinitely more useful to his studio director than any number of photographs or plans. He got into touch with me and gave me several orders. When he discovered that the models were made of wood he almost danced with joy.

"'Gee! that's just what I want!' he exclaimed, pointing to a miniature Elizabethan mansion I had made for him. 'Do you know what I'm going to do with that one? I'm going to burn it!'

"'Burn it?' I said, feeling rather hurt.

"'Yep!' was the reply. 'There's a terrible fire supposed to take place in this story. Instead of burning up the big set as I intended, I guess we'll just burn the model and shoot some "close-ups." It'll look just like the real thing.'"



Models in the making. The busy workshop in Gray's Inn Road.

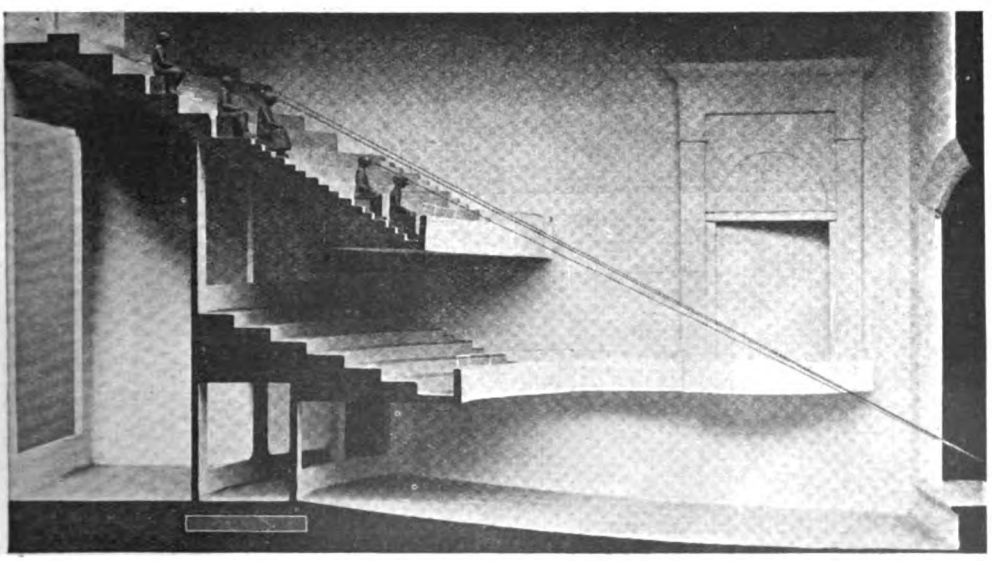
"Tell me," I asked, after a pause, "are there any branches of model-making which directly affect our old friend, the Man in the Street? You told me just now that one of your models had been the means of preventing hundreds of innocent people from bumping their heads when mounting the staircase of a public building. You may be a public benefactor in other ways."

"Well," said Mr. Thorp, "if you like to put it that way, perhaps I am. I can most certainly claim to have saved many people from cricked necks and other discomforts which sometimes exist in badly-constructed theatres. Here is a model which I made for the proposed rebuilding of the St. James's Theatre. The joint architects, Messrs. A. Blomfield Jackson, of Lincoln's Inn, and H. Beaumont Herts, of New York, had the model made so that they could ensure that every member of the audience should have an unobstructed view of the stage. We made a number of little figures to represent members of the audience,

Demonstrating the solidity of a model villa.

and fitted them with little wire loops to represent their eyes, to which we attached threads. We then moved the little figures to various parts of the auditorium, and at the same time stretched the threads to various parts of the stage. So long as the thread could be carried from any one of these figures to any part of the stage without touching a part of the model or another figure, we knew that every member of the audience would have a clear line of sight. You will understand that it would have been practically impossible to carry out this test on the plans.

"Here is a model which will be of particular interest to Londoners," he went on. "The engineers of the Underground Railway are at present engaged upon extensive alterations to the station at Piccadilly Circus. If you were to see the plans you would probably mistake them for a futurist picture of Hampton Court Maze, as they are quite indecipherable to the layman. But a few minutes' study of this model will enable anybody to



A model made for the proposed rebuilding of St. James's Theatre, showing the ingenious method by which theatre architects ensure that each member of the audience shall have an unobstructed view of the stage.

understand exactly what is being done. First of all, look at the street. The existing Tube station, with the lift shafts, is shown in the foreground on the right. Now you will observe that on all sides of the Circus are proposed new stairways which will lead to a central booking-office right underneath the fountain."

Mr. Thorp lifted the top from the model, revealing the miniature subways, booking-offices, escalators, and even the underground platforms and railways themselves.

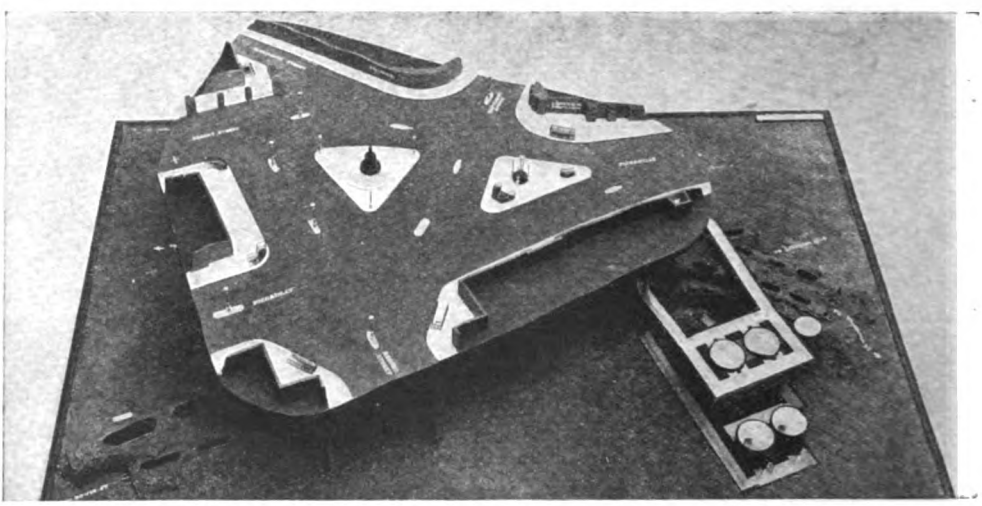
"As you will see, no matter which entrance the intending passenger selects it will lead him to the central ticket offices, where he will pass through the new automatic 'passimeters' and thence *vià* the moving stairways to the depths. The old lift-shafts, apparently, will not be used at all."

"When you are at work on a model of this description," I asked, "do you sometimes find it necessary to go underground to study certain details at first hand?"

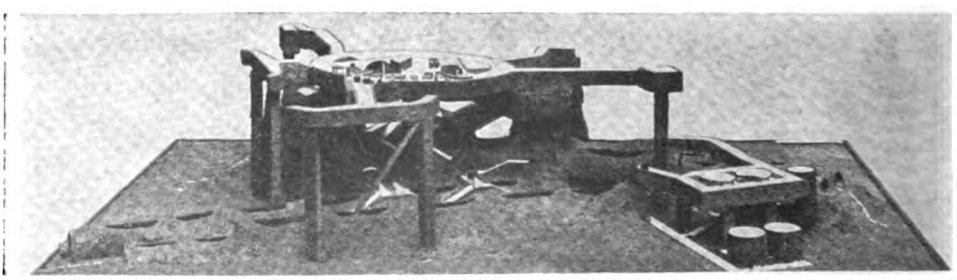
"Oh, yes. In fact, my work takes me to all kinds of interesting places. Not long ago I had to make a model of a coal-mine, showing the workings and machinery both above and below ground, the arrangement of the strata, and the system of ventilation. It was only by a personal visit to the mine that I was able to get the detail correct. Again, I recently spent several hours at a gas-works preparatory to making an elaborate model of a gas-retort.

"Which reminds me," added Mr. Thorp, with a laugh. "Some time ago I executed a number of models for a well-known writer on Spiritualism, illustrating his conception of the various 'planes' upon which departed spirits are supposed to exist. One day he rushed into my office greatly excited—though whether he was in earnest or not I do not know to this day—and said, 'Mr. Thorp, I have just thought of a wonderful idea. I want a model of Hell—and you are just the man to make it for me!'

"I declined with thanks."



Piccadilly Circus, showing the entrances to the proposed underground subways.



Piccadilly Circus "with the lid off," revealing the subways leading to the central ticket offices, now being built beneath the famous fountain. Below are the escalator shafts and the tunnels of the actual railway. The existing lift-shafts are shown on the right.

"Now, mother, do listen," and he recited the sonorous lines.

"Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory"

by

W. B. MAXWELL

ILLUSTRATED BY W. HATHERELL, R.I.

MRS. BENNING, the upholstress, had an almost feudal respect for the best people of Tudor Green, and they for their part nearly all of them employed her and spoke well of her because of her industry and honest work. She was a widow and had one child, a crippled boy.

Small, grey-haired, stonily desolate in manner, she seemed to come to life directly we showed her the fauteuil or sofa that needed reparation. With the air of a veterinary surgeon examining a horse, she ran her wrinkled hands over it, and then pronounced a verdict.

"No, sir, it's too far gone for *me*," and she advised us to send it to a big firm in the High Street. Or she would rise briskly

Copyright, U.S.A., 1924, by W. B. Maxwell.

from her investigation, and say, "Yes, ma'am, I can make a good job of that. D'you wish me to do it here, or shall I take it away to my place?"

Her "place" was in the London Road, a very old house with a strip of front garden that she had obliterated almost entirely in erecting a shed to contain her workroom and her storeroom. A neighbouring builder used to lend her a hand-cart and two men to move the big pieces of furniture, and her little boy, Enoch, liked nothing better than to accompany the cart on these expeditions. Later, when he was bigger and had left school, one could see him all day long in the doorway of the shed, watching the traffic, and snapping his fingers delightedly if anything remarkable passed by. Soldiers always excited him greatly. If he heard the sound of bugles and drums he could not sleep that night. Their echo kept him awake, and filled his blood and nerves with fire.

"He's so fanciful," Mrs. Benning used to tell us. For, although habitually maintaining a deferential silence, she grew expansive if encouraged to speak of her adored son. She told one of his early ailments and this strange sort of rheumatism that had finally settled upon him and dragged down his left shoulder, making him shamble in his gait too, "like as if he was pulled all a one side, ma'am." But she hastened to add that Dr. McGrigor would soon remedy this trouble—just as he had done with the others. "Dr. McGrigor is very kind to Enoch, ma'am. And you should hear him praise the poetry that Enoch's taken to writing."

"Does your boy write poetry?"

"Indeed he does, ma'am." And the poor soul would bring forth from her black reticule a copy of the lad's verses, with a confidence so touching that one was forced to say they were very good. Whereas, in fact, they were bad beyond human badness.

It was Mr. Wheeler, of the public library, where the boy had a ticket and read much, who advised that he had better abandon literature as an aim in life.

"Let me see," said Mr. Wheeler, gravely, after handing her back the manuscripts that she had submitted to his expert judgment. "How old is your son now?"

"Fifteen and a half. Not a day older."

"Then, frankly, considering his age, he does not show the development that would justify high expectations." And Mr. Wheeler, putting it all very nicely, said that he believed there were numerous poets who possess every requisite quality except the power of expression. So to speak, they are dumb poets, and it is for them that the few vocal poets write and sing.

This was a pill to swallow, but on the whole she took it as a compliment. She would rather have a dumb poet than nothing at all. She was full of joy when Enoch promised to make a fresh start and be a painter.

She bought him materials of every kind, and he used to paint the old stone bridge over the river. He painted at all seasons and in all weathers; but wet or fine, winter or summer, the picture he made of it was much the same. The crudeness and violence of these sketches made one blink one's eyes.

"That's just how I see it, sir," said Enoch, trembling with shy emotion. "All blazing at me—all on fire."

He went on painting month after month, year after year; slightly hampered now and then in his out-of-door studies by hateful street boys who followed him, shouting at him, imitating his dropped shoulder and queer gait; but generally protected by local policemen, postmen, milkmen, who all knew him and his mother too. At little cheap stationers' shops one might see his latest presentments of the always recognizable bridge offered for sale; occasionally one of his friends from the police-station or the post-office sat to him for a gratis portrait; and he was at least once mentioned in the local newspaper.

"Doctor! doctor!" said Enoch, running after his medical attendant. "There's something about me in the newspaper"; and he laughed diffidently yet gaily.

"So you're in the paper, are you?" And while Enoch talked, Dr. McGrigor was looking at him very kindly and very attentively. When the boy stopped talking he echoed that question of the public librarian.

"Tell me, Enoch. Time slips by so fast. How old are you now?"

"Eighteen, sir. Eighteen on my last birthday—a fortnight ago."

"As old as that! Well, well."

"Yes, sir."

Enoch stood there on the pavement a little way from the garden gate, tall, thin, slightly crooked of spine, smiling at the doctor. His hair was fine, silky, and in need of cutting, but no sign of a beard as yet showed on his chin or upper lip; the complexion was pallid, freckled; his light-blue eyes were set rather prominently between high cheek-bones. The whole narrow face conveyed an impression of unusual refinement, delicacy, and, to a skilled examiner, much else also. From within there seemed to glow an eagerness, an anxiety, an inappeasable excitement.

It was after this little conversation that Dr. McGrigor once more suggested to Mrs. Benning the advisability of getting Enoch into a certain institution for the mentally deficient of which he had spoken years ago.

"Oh, don't go back to that," cried Mrs. Benning. "I couldn't, I *couldn't* part with him"; and she wept and wrung her hands. "God in heaven, what should I do without him?"

NOBODY could have seen them of an evening after her hard day's work without comprehending what a bitter thing separation would be. With blinds drawn and the firelight flickering on the dark old wainscot, the room had much the same aspect as it had worn a hundred or two hundred years ago, and they themselves, shut in together, did not seem to belong to any particular country or period. Perhaps, most of all, they looked like a mother and son in one of Hans Andersen's fairy tales.

There was gas down below in the workroom of the shed, but up here only oil-lamps and candles were used—the strong lamp with its shaded glare when Enoch was painting or sketching, and just a single candle when he was reading to her or they merely gossiped. She liked best their quiet chatter; especially when he questioned and she answered, telling him about those houses of the gentry the insides of which he had never seen.

The house she talked of with the greatest pleasure was the one called Cloister House, situated near The Precincts, beside that spacious rectangle of grass from which Tudor Green takes its name. Here lived Colonel and Mrs. Meredith—and their daughter, Miss Isabel Meredith. Mrs. Benning never wearied in expressing her respectful regard for the parents and her admiration of the young lady.

"Yes, mother, tell me more about her." Enoch had begun to draw, although only the candle was burning. He sat with a hand hiding his eyes and made scribbled sketches of a girl's face—a long, a grotesquely long nose, immense eyes, and a black coronet of hair round the forehead.

"Go on," he murmured. And in reply to further questions his mother spoke, again with lavish praise, of Miss Isabel's lovely straight nose, her big soft eyes, and her dark hair.

"Enoch, show me what you've drawn there. Oh, what you doing?"

He was tearing up the paper into small bits, and he sighed. "A secret, mother. But go on telling me"; and his voice vibrated with enthusiasm. "There's one thing you haven't mentioned. Her smile! That wonderful melting smile."

"Yes, and so she has a nice smile," said Mrs. Benning, surprised by his sudden excitement. "But what do you know about her smile?"

"Because I take my hat off to her whenever I see her, and I say 'Good morning' or 'Good afternoon,' and she bows and smiles at me."

"Does she, then? Well, indeed, that's very kind of her. But it's no more than I would have expected. Enoch, I'm glad you take off your hat. But you must never go to the liberty of speaking to her—not unless she speaks to you first. Kind and affable as she is, she's not one that anybody could take a liberty with."

Enoch hung his head. "I'm not likely to take liberties with her," he muttered, his voice dropping until the final words became inaudible. "To me she is a princess. Yes, I have made her my princess."

There was something curiously apt in the boy's fanciful epithet, because of a truth this girl was so very different from the ordinary girls of Tudor Green that she seemed a creature of another sphere, a dethroned princess compelled to shelter here as real princesses had often done in past times, coming to the pleasant if commonplace suburb when swift mob-rule drove them from their courts and palaces. In fact, she was, as far as birth goes, an aristocrat among plebeians. But beyond inherited graces, she was completely sweet and good. And this was so patent, so irrefutable, that our typically suburban girls, who, feeling that she made them look cheap and common even in their best frocks, began by hating her, sometimes ended by metaphorically prostrating themselves at her feet and meekly worshipping her. Although such "a swell," as they termed it, they saw that she was totally devoid of "side." She did not make friends of them; but she treated them always as equals, courteously accepted introductions of their brothers, had a kind word or two for their bald, shy fathers and their stout, effusive mammas.

I cannot say if she was really beautiful, although without the slightest doubt she produced an impression of beauty as well as of gracefulness and charm, but to us elders—Dr. McGrigor, the vicar, and myself—the shining light that she gave forth was, as I have stated, her sweetness and goodness. It may be added that those younger men who had craved for sisterly introductions—our honest pen-driving, golf-playing suburban youths—were quite overwhelmed by the briefest conversation with her, at once getting hot and flustered, standing first on one leg, then on the other, making themselves ridiculous, as their introducers did not fail to tell them afterwards.

One day, soon after Enoch's vain efforts to make portraits of her from memory, Mrs.

Benning received an order to do some work at Cloister House.

"Mother," the boy said, abruptly, "ask her to come here and see my pictures."

"Ask who? D'you mean Miss Isabel?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I couldn't venture."

"Yes, *please*. I want you to."

And Mrs. Benning, in the course of her work at Cloister House, screwed up sufficient courage to convey the request.

"It would make him so proud and happy, miss. You know, he thinks all the world of you."

Miss Isabel at once consented.

Everything was ready when the appointed hour arrived, the sitting-room swept and garnished, the artistic exhibits laid out on the table and chairs and against the walls.

"Here she is," cried Mrs. Benning. "Punctual to the minute. You bide here. I'll bring her up."

The gracious visitor appeared. She was there, standing in the humble room. She smiled at them. Then, self-possessed, rather grave, but sweetly attentive, she looked at all that he showed her.

"Another one of the bridge. Ah, this is in winter, not summer?"

"Yes, I've done it in all seasons."

The lad stood close beside her as he eagerly handed her the terrible pastels, his hands trembling, his eyes on her face.

"Thank you so much."

He remained in the room, shaking, quivering, gasping for breath, while his mother led her out.

Down below on the threshold Mrs. Benning thanked her profusely for her kindness and condescension.

But the girl stopped her by an unexpectedly sudden gesture, and as she spoke her calm voice seemed to break.

"Don't—please don't. Of course I'd do anything. I'm so sorry for him, so dreadfully sorry," and Mrs. Benning saw that tears had come into her eyes.

Mrs. Benning drew back as if the words had given her a shock, and as she stood and watched the girl go along the path and out of the gate she wiped moisture from her own eyes.

"What did she say to you downstairs?" the boy asked, eagerly.

"Colonel Meredith don't seem to like the lining of the dyed curtains, and I'm to change it."

Mrs. Benning knew that to report what the girl had really said would break his heart; but she was not able to invent any complimentary message about the pictures.

Then, on an evening soon after this, when they were sitting together in the candlelight, the boy terrified her by a wild and frantic outburst of emotion. He vowed he loved Miss Meredith, felt devoured with love of her, and the dream of his life was to become so great and famous that he might one day marry her.

It was exactly like the fairy tales—the poor old widow woman quaking with fear, expostulating, commanding, and the son telling her it is destiny. He desires the king's fair daughter for bride and will have none other.

"Now you listen to me, Enoch." She had made him sit down, and for a minute or so he was quiet. "You must never, never let her guess at any of this foolishness."

"Oh, but she knows!" said the boy, wildly. "She *knows*, of course."

The mother was more frightened than before.

"What you mean by that? She knows? Have you been speakin' to her—or writin' to her?"

"No. But it's impossible that such love does not reach its object. It's impossible that it should not break down all obstacles and one day put her hand in mine."

"Nonsense! Try to be sensible. D'you suppose she'd ever have come here if for one moment she knew you had dared to raise your eyes——"

"Yes, that's why she came."

Almost panic-stricken, Mrs. Benning clutched at him, clung to him. "Enoch, I'm serious—deadly serious."

"So am I, mother."

"If—if you don't drop it, they'll say you're mad. They'll lock you up. They'll take you from me. Heavens above, they'll put you away—certain sure!"

Then, mastering her fear, she argued with him, pleaded with him, besought a promise never by word or deed to betray his secret. Surely he must see that it would be regarded as "wicked impudence"; he would make worse than "a laughing-stock" of himself; they would have all the gentry of the neighbourhood set against them. She would lose her work, no one would employ her, he would have ruined her as well as himself.

He limped and shambled about the room, groaning in physical pain when he lifted a hand above his head and tried to wave it. She watched him, terrified now by his increasing strangeness of voice and manner. But before going up the second flight of stairs to his little bedroom at the top of the house he gave her a solemn promise to hide his secret.

She climbed the stairs herself several hours later and stood listening at the door. No light showed from beneath it. In the darkness the sound of his voice made her shiver. He was talking, raving. Such

words, oh, such words—his own words muddled up with scraps out of those poetry books, as she surmised—*mad* words!

"Isabel, my princess, queen of the world, take pity on me! My spirit is calling to your spirit"; and he groaned. "Listen to the song of my love. Your eyes are sunbeams or sharp knives. They have pierced me and torn me. Oh, kill me or let me live! Isabel! Isabel!"

Mrs. Benning shivered. Not even Dr. McGrigor must learn that her boy talked such gibberish, all alone in his room in the middle of the night.

After this for a little while he said strange things and did strange things. He stopped painting, and said he wished to help his mother with her arduous labours. He said he felt ashamed for never having thought of doing so till now. He attempted impossible tasks. One day, when some heavy furniture was to be moved, he obtained the builder's hand-cart without the two men, and tried to carry through the enterprise by himself. He was found lying senseless in the roadway by the Green, not far from Cloister House.

Dr. McGrigor, keeping him in bed for several weeks, reproved him and said that a strong man could hardly have done it.

"But I mean to be a strong man."

The doctor shook his head gently, and said that such extreme strength was beyond reasonable hope.

"Cannot mind triumph over matter? They say so in books I've read. Faith-healing?"

"Well, yes, to a certain extent."

"No, doctor, to an *uncertain* extent Spirit is supreme. There are more things in heaven and earth—— How does it go on? Oh, I've such a cracking headache. I feel as if my head was opening and shutting."

After this Dr. McGrigor warned Mrs. Benning that at all costs Enoch must be kept quiet. This exaltation was dangerous.

When he got up and went about again he seemed quite calm.

The lad stood close beside her as he eagerly handed her the terrible pastels, his hands trembling, his eyes on her face.

THE war came, and as if in a minute Tudor Green underwent remarkable changes. Bugles and drums sounded. The streets were full of khaki. A vast soldiers' camp had been established in the River Park. Naturally, Enoch was exalted.

Many of the big houses were converted into hospitals. One on the Green belonged to the Red Cross. Dressed in the white uniform of the Red Cross, the girls seemed very attractive. But the white-robed princess, the sweet queen of them all, was not there to put an aching pain into the heart of the boy by the sight of her. She

had gone straight out to France, she was with the French in the retreat; already she had distinguished herself; she was mentioned "in an order"—or something of that kind; the French were going to give her a decoration. All this was in the local paper.

"Mother, isn't it glorious of her?" said the boy, with glowing eyes. "Isn't it what she would do? Oh, I'd like to paint her as Joan of Arc—a great symbolic picture, to hang in our Parliament House."

Two or three reservists well known to the Bennings were immediately killed—Jack Sims among them, the jolly, chaffing, laughter-loving milkman. It seemed impossible. Here a week ago. For the first time in her life Mrs. Benning felt glad that her son was a cripple.

Of course, she did not know that he had made "a laughing-stock" of himself at the camp of soldiers by imploring them to enrol him. "Ha-ha-ha! No, my lad, we don't want lop-sided ones." Or that he had bothered people at that Red Cross hospital on the Green, where Dr. McGrigor was now working so hard. Or that he had followed the doctor to his surgery after midnight, and there, kneeling on the floor, had wept and raved, with pitiful entreaties that he might be somehow sent out to France and the battle line.

He was exalted. Indeed, there was a fever in everybody's blood. One heard the bugles calling; the drums, the noisy, insistent drums, rolled, rolled, rolled; the tramp, tramp of marching feet echoed from our house walls, echoed again in our hearts when the columns of recruits had passed by.

Sitting in the candle-light at home, he read to his mother what he vowed was the most wonderful poem ever written.

"Mr. Wheeler says so too. I got it at the Free Library. It's American; but Mr. Wheeler says all the nations should use it. We have no such hymn of battle. Now, mother, do listen," and he recited the sonorous lines.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on. . . ."

With every line the reader's voice grew stronger, more voluminous. It seemed to fill the room and spread out through the walls, filling the quiet winter night with its vibrations.

"He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!"

And when he had finished he walked about almost erect, scarcely limping.

THE war continued; and Mrs. Benning, who had dreaded hard times and the loss of all profitable employment, found that her modest little trade flourished exceedingly. Never had she been so busy, never so well paid. Partly because she now needed help and partly to keep him indoors and contented, she asked Enoch to give her some assistance. He assisted her in a fitful, preoccupied way.

Then, after a time, on the advice of her friend the doctor, she put him to work in the printing office of Mr. Ridge. It was light work; and Mr. Ridge, bereft of all his lusty young men, was only too glad to get even a cripple—even a half-witted cripple.

But one morning Enoch deserted his new post. A message came from Mr. Ridge saying he was absent without leave and asking if illness was the reason. Poor Mrs. Benning passed a terrible day, waiting for him, hunting for him, hurrying back to the house to see if he had not yet returned. The police and everybody else were too hard at work to give her aid. Then late at night, when she had fallen into a condition of abject distress, her worst fears were relieved by a letter from the boy himself. He said that he had gone away, but she was not to fret or worry, for he would "report" to her as soon as possible.

Not to fret or worry! The fortnight that followed was a hundred years of anguish.

And then, at dusk, as she sat miserably alone in that deserted sitting-room, she heard a strange footstep on the stairs. Next moment the door opened and a soldier in uniform entered the room. He saluted her by raising his hand to his cap, and stood stiffly just inside the door.

"Enoch!"

"Yes, mother. I've got my wish." He smiled again, and his whole face twitched. "See how I'm dressed. Look," and he touched his belt and the buttons of his tunic.

Then he came forward to the table and they embraced.

"But what you doin'?" she said, weeping and shaking. "What folly is this now?" She believed that it was a masquerade. "Goin' about dressed up! They'll send you to prison for wearing uniform."

"Oh, no. I belong to the Army. R.A.M.C.

We're under orders soon for France. I'm cured. Watch me. Don't be afraid."

It was a miracle. He stood there erect, a sound man, not a cripple, and he moved about the room without a limp. But his mother, watching him, saw that his face contorted itself spasmodically.

"Enoch, you're in pain. You're in horrible pain. I can see it."

"No, no. I'm all right—absolutely all right." His movements were made in apparent freedom; his voice sounded strong and full; a fire invisible but overwhelming seemed to burn within him. He was her son, and not her son. "Mother, I must be off now. I'm a soldier—not free. Can't miss the bugle-call."

He kissed her, went down the stairs, and stalked away.

In the name of reason how and why had they enlisted him? Was it an overdriven, half-insane recruiting officer acting under the pressure of a scare—goaded by the imperative necessity to find live men of any sort and put them in khaki to replace the dead men? The combing-out process in full swing?—each semi-efficient releasing a real efficient? No matter—the thing was done. In sober truth he had been taken for the R.A.M.C.; in grim earnest his unit was going to France. Soon, incredibly soon, they were gone.

Mrs. Benning bowed her grey head beneath this stupefying blow of Fate. She came into our houses to do her work, and shrinking from us seemed herself to have shrunk. Always small and insignificant, she now appeared scarcely anything at all—hardly a person, an expression; a desolate, stony greyness that stooped over chairs in corners of rooms to the sound of a needle stitching or a pair of scissors cutting, that rose to curtsy when we spoke to it, that tried but could not speak to us in reply.

She could not at this time speak to anybody except Dr. McGrigor.

"You'll have him back," said the doctor, with an effort to conceal his forebodings. "He'll be invalided—and you'll have him back before you can look round."

"I'm sure I hope so, sir."

Dr. McGrigor gave her explanations. As to her son's miraculous cure, he explained that under the stimulus of violent excitement old adhesions had been broken down, filaments torn, and so forth. He said the same sort of thing happened when in the emotion of intense fear bedridden persons who had not moved for ages rushed out of a burning house or fled from burglars. Moreover, he reminded her how, a longish time ago, a famous quack came here, to this very Tudor Green, and performed such spurious miracles, ordering poor rheumatic people to throw away their crutches, to rise and walk. And several obeyed, to the amazement of the crowd. But they relapsed afterwards; they were worse than before. Dr. McGrigor took a gloomy view of the matter.

SHE had the boy back within two months. He had served three days at the front, and then had been in hospital at Rouen, in London, and lastly at Tudor Green among those white dresses of the Red Cross. Now he lay in his own bed at home. Dr. McGrigor had used his influence to bring him here from London, and then had authorized the removal to his mother's house. There was no hope. The lad was done for.

One or other of the white-robed nurses walked across the Green every day to attend to him.

He lay in his own bed, but not in his old room; for Mrs. Benning had brought the bed down from the top floor to the sitting-room—the best room in the house—the room where he used to paint his pictures, eat his meals, and talk to her of an evening. She was very brave in her hopeless grief.

Sometimes he fought for breath during long suffocating fits—fought for his breath, which, as she knew, was all that remained to him of life. Her only orders from doctor or nurse were to keep him quiet, to make him comfortable; and it broke her broken heart to stand by impotent and watch his pain. The time of year was high summer, and the window blinds had been lowered to prevent the brilliant sunshine from pouring in. The room seemed strange with this perpetual twilight, ghostly, another and an unfamiliar room; from the roadway, as if from another world, came the noise of the traffic, voices, the sound of marching feet; and every now and then one could hear the distant roll of drums and the faint bugle-calls far away in the camp by the river. But he noticed nothing; he did not seem to hear.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory," he murmured. "Mine eyes have seen the glory." He said this often; but for the most part he was light-headed, babbling to himself unintelligibly.

Then one day he called out and spoke loudly.

"Mother, send for her—send for her now."

"Who d'you mean?" said the old woman, trembling. "Miss Isabel?"

"Yes."

"But she's not even here. She's in France."

"I know. Send to France. I want her. I must have her"; and he struggled in violent emotion.

The miserable mother pacified him somehow, but it was terrible while it lasted, and in the course of that day he compelled her to go thrice to Cloister House. The first time she learned from the parlourmaid, who was an old acquaintance, that Colonel and Mrs. Meredith were expecting their daughter home on leave—anxiously expecting her, because her return appeared to have been unduly delayed. Mrs. Benning begged the parlourmaid to give Miss Isabel their humble duty and implore her to come across to them if only for a minute or two. This, however, did not satisfy him. He made his mother write a message and put it in an envelope addressed directly to Miss Isabel. Then for the third time he sent her, at nightfall, to inquire if there was any news. There was none.

Next day he was quiet, seeming to breathe more easily, and not talking to Mrs. Benning or to himself. Indeed, in the afternoon he appeared to be sleeping so comfortably that she left the house for half an hour to make a few purchases. Earlier, before he fell asleep, he had spoken a few words which proved that his governing thought was unchanged.

"Mother! If she comes, leave me alone with her. Promise you'll leave us alone. Thank you, mother"; and he closed his eyes and settled his head on the pillow.

Mrs. Benning remained with him for an hour or more, perhaps for two hours, and then, as he slept on, never moving, she went out to the shops in High Street.

Returning to the house, she heard voices and hurried upstairs. They were her son's voice and another voice.

The girl had come. She was sitting by the bedside, in the nurse's white uniform, with her back to the door, and she did not turn round. The boy, raised high in the bed, was looking at her. She held his right hand in both her hands, and they were murmuring to each other. The boy never shifted his eyes from her face; and neither

He saluted her by raising his hand to his

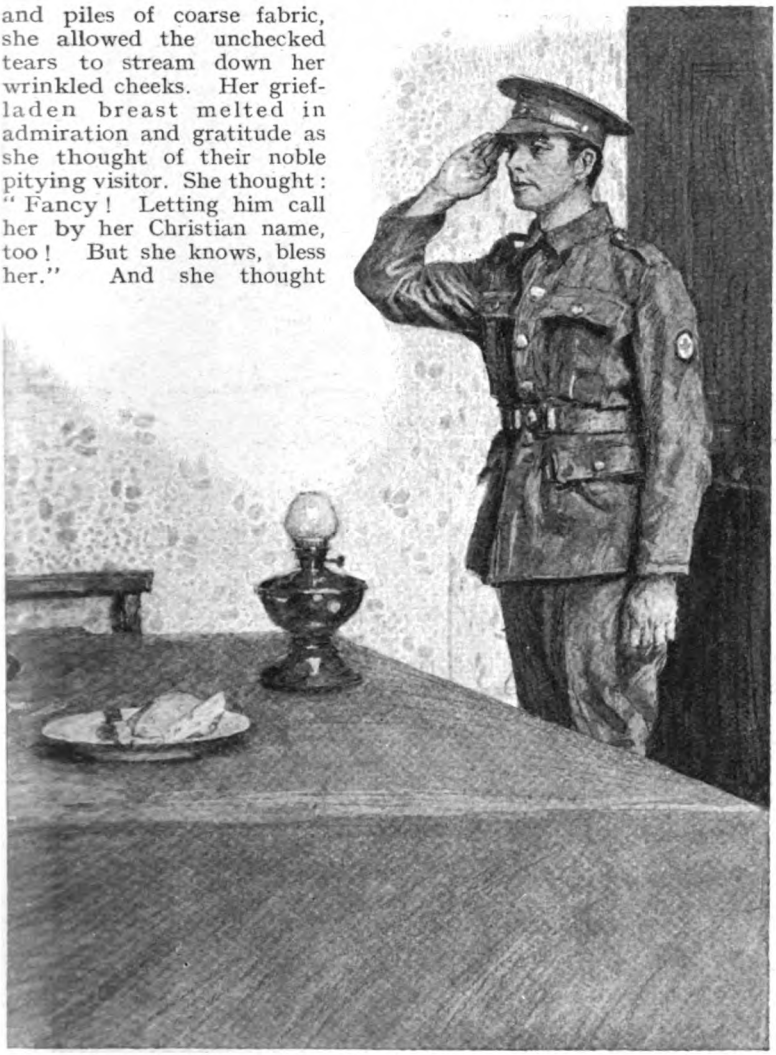
of them seemed to be conscious of the presence of Mrs. Benning during the few moments that she stood at the opened door, watching and listening. They murmured endearments—such words, oh, such words! Mrs. Benning heard the names exchanged, but scarcely further; for one voice was so sweet and low, and the other was little more than a vibration.

"Isabel, my darling—my own darling girl. At last, Isabel, at last. I wanted you—I wanted you so dreadfully."

"Dear Enoch, I knew."

Mrs. Benning shut the door inch by inch without making the slightest sound, and went down into the work-room of the shed. Down there, among the stripped furniture

and piles of coarse fabric, she allowed the unchecked tears to stream down her wrinkled cheeks. Her grief-laden breast melted in admiration and gratitude as she thought of their noble pitying visitor. She thought: "Fancy! Letting him call her by her Christian name, too! But she knows, bless her." And she thought



cap, and stood stiffly just inside the door.

again, "That's a lady—a real lady—not like some folk I could mention. Flesh and blood is flesh and blood—to *her*. Good and kind. Able to understand. She was always sorry for him"; and Mrs. Benning shed more tears. "Ah, she'll be sorrier now."

The minutes passed, and it seemed that someone had come from the threshold of the house and gone by the wooden wall of the shed. "That's her, going!" Mrs. Benning hurried out. But there was no one. The pathway was empty. "Then she's still with him," she thought. "She's staying a nice while."

But Mrs. Benning kept her promise. She left them alone. She would not disturb them—until of a sudden the thought of hospitality came into her mind. The visitor might like a cup of tea! "I'll make some tea and take it up." And she did so.

She carried the tray into the room, only to find that the visitor had really gone. Her son was lying in his usual attitude, fast asleep. She put down the tray and went to the bed. Then immediately she took alarm and uttered a shriek. Next minute she was running, hatless, frantic, along the pavement towards High Street.

By chance she soon saw Dr. McGrigor's motor-car, shouted, stopped it, and brought the doctor to the house. He said at once that it was all over, and gently drew her from the bed. She sat by the table, rocking herself and moaning.

"Tell me how he was this morning."

And, sobbing, she presently told him.

"Better, I thought. Very quiet. Oh, doctor, was it the excitement of talking? His joy like! Did the joy of it finish his strength?"

Then she told him of the visit. But he said she was wrong in supposing it had been Miss Meredith. It must have been one of the nurses from the hospital.

"Oh, no, sir. I'm not mistaken."

"But when do you say this was—this afternoon?"

"Not half an hour ago."

Dr. McGrigor started, went back to the bed, and stooped over it. Then, rising, he shook his head.

"He couldn't have spoken to anybody since three o'clock to-day. My poor Mrs.

The boy never shifted his eyes from her face; and neither of them seemed to be conscious of the presence of Mrs. Benning.

Benning, he has been dead for considerably more than two hours. Didn't you feel it when you kissed him just now? Stone cold. But if you're wrong about the time, I hope you're not mistaken about Miss Meredith. Now I'll send someone to take all trouble off your hands."

And he hurried away, driving round the Green to that house where, as he knew, they had been in such piteous anxiety since day-break. Perhaps no one admired and valued our princess more than he did, and her father was his best friend. He was going to enter cheerily, saying: "So you have got her back safe and sound"; but then some instinct made him determine to put his questions guardedly. The maidservant, however, drew him into the hall before he said anything. "Oh, sir, come in and help them." Her eyes were red-rimmed, her cheeks tear-stained. "Yes, they've had the second telegram—killed by a shell."

He did all that he could for them, and then went on with his work—as everyone had to do in those cruel days. But at the hospital he asked the matron which nurse had been to the Bennings. "Find out, please. I want to speak to her."

The matron came and said that no one had been to the Bennings.

"That's odd," said the doctor. "That's very odd"; and he went on with his work.

A LITTLE while after the funeral Mrs. Benning stood meekly in the office of the ornamental stonemasons, waiting to take her turn at the desk where a man was busily booking orders. An open window showed the rich summer foliage of trees, a patch of tranquil sky, a warm glow of sunlight; and through the window, borne from a distance on the gentle air, came the faint, the very faint sound of beaten drums and blown bugles.

"Now, ma'am?"

Mrs. Benning, looking smaller than ever in her black dress, black gloves, black veil, came to the desk, and chose from the picture-book the tomb that she fancied.

"Yes, I'll go as far as thirty pounds. It's a lot of money. But what does it matter? See, I want you only just to put his name, with the two dates—and a quotation."

"What quotation would you wish? There's a Latin one greatly favoured nowadays. Looks very nice deep cut and gilded. 'Dulce est pro——'"

"No. I've written down what I want. It's a bit out of his favourite poetry. There. 'Mine eyes have seen the glory!'"

"Very good." And the man pinned the slip of paper to the leaf in his order-book. "That's quite all right. 'Mine eyes have seen the glory.'"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 136.

Now solvers turn their minds to politics:
On Lords and Commons all their thoughts they fix.

1. Behead two words, with Shakespeare found, and played:
   One will be this, and one be maiden made.
2. Had king (whom Byron names) a son at all?
   If so, the name of one can you recall?
3. A baron's title? English watering-place.
   His name? That is the quarry for your chase.
4. Plain, narrow, delicate; the crossing done,
   Lucre, with silver, could be quickly won.
5. The monster by the maiden's side is seen;
   The hero comes, who weds the heroine.
6. Holy, unwise, he thought that in a bride
   Meekness must with her beauty be allied.
7. A beast is found, and mountain, who can tell
   To find the other? Cut off head and tail.
8. Select an isle, but only half must stay.
   The absent half two coins combined display.
9. Thus acts the singer—what else could he do?
   Mixed up, a geologic word we view.
10. A lady fair to solvers we present,
    Divided is she on the continent.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 136 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on November 12th.

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 135.

(The Third of the Series.)

1. F	ar	O
2. I	ma	M
3. T	ar	A
4. Z	oa	R
5. G	ec	K
6. E	noug	H
7. R	eplic	A
8. A	path	Y
9. L	il	Y
10. D.	O. R.	A.
11. S	u	M

NOTES.—Proem. FitzGerald; Suffolk, East Anglia. Khayyam, a tent-maker, as was S. Paul. Light 3. Moore, Irish Melodies. 4. Genesis xix. Light 5. Twelfth Night, v., 1; Malvolio. 10. Defence of Realm Acts.

In No. 133, "Haverstock" and "Revetment" provide satisfactory answers for the second and sixth lights.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

THE TUBE MYSTERY

by

R. F. FOSTER

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

I.

DURING the whole of my association with Ravenhill, the reporter and crime investigator, there was never a case of any importance which presented such a seemingly baffling mystery, and yet which occupied less of his time than any other, than that which by common consent was called "The Tube Mystery." As was generally the case, our first knowledge of the facts was gained from the newspapers, and so astounding and remarkable was the affair that the Press gave the report first place, even though Parliament was on the eve of a momentous session and events on the Continent were assuming a very grave aspect.

For the whole of a memorable afternoon London was kept agog with speculation, for the early editions of the evening papers contained brief "stop-press" announcements of the affair, and subsequent editions presented new facts and new theories whereby interest was kept unflagging.

The final editions told of a discovery which gave a fine air of completeness to the mystery and enabled speculation to proceed on definitely impossible lines.

I give here a summary of the events in the order in which they occurred.

At half-past three a Tube train drew up at the Finsbury Park terminus of the Piccadilly Tube, and John Hamilton, a conductor, having realized that the train had been behaving in an unusual manner during the latter part of the journey from Hammersmith, and having come to the conclusion that the driver, William Messiger, had either had some difficulty with his controls or had become unwell, left the rear end of the first coach immediately the train came to a standstill and walked the short distance up the platform to the front of the train. Looking in the window of the driver's cab, he saw that it was empty. The door connecting the cab with the first coach was shut, and Hamilton was positive that Messiger could not have left the cab by the side door before he arrived.

He immediately went back to the coach and watched the passengers alight. Messiger was not amongst them.

Unable to believe the evidence of his senses, Hamilton called a fellow-conductor, told him of the astounding fact that the train was driverless, and the two went to the cab and opened the door. At first nothing unusual met their gaze, save that on the floor were a driver's cap, tunic, and blue overall. Upon examination the cap was seen to be badly crushed, but someone had evidently endeavoured to make the damage unnoticeable. But inside the cap the two men found a large smear of blood, which was quite damp.

Thoroughly alarmed, Hamilton and his comrade informed the station superintendent and the police were summoned. It was deemed advisable to shunt the train, and, it being a slack time of the day, another train was found as a substitute.

The police questioned Hamilton closely, but he was able to add nothing which would throw any light on the affair. He was urgent in his declaration that he had gone to the driver's cab immediately the train had come to a standstill, and that he had been able to see all the passengers off the first coach as well. The station superintendent had ordered a thorough search to be made of the whole place as soon as he had been informed of Messiger's disappearance, but the search had yielded no result.

The train had apparently been driverless when it arrived. Impossible as that appeared, yet it was the only thinkable solution to the perplexing problem. But how had it been enabled to come to a standstill in exactly the right place? The affair was an utter mystery.

Nearly two hours passed by. Then came a wire from Gloucester Road Station to the effect that a dead body had been found in the tunnel between Gloucester Road Station and South Kensington, and that the body had been identified as being that of the missing driver. Two drivers had declared they had seen an object in the tunnel at that spot, and a search had been made. Messiger's body was minus tunic, overall, and cap, and the head had been badly battered. By reason of the fact that the cap which was found in the driver's cab had been crumpled and smeared with blood, it seemed obvious that murder had been committed, and that the body had been flung from the train into the tunnel.

But how had the train proceeded from that spot to Finsbury Park? If driven by another person, then why had that person not been discovered?

It was a story to set many a brain thinking, and Ravenhill and I had waited impatiently throughout that afternoon for fresh news. We discussed every probability and bought every edition of the evening papers as they appeared, but without either of us being able to suggest what was the key to the mystery. We went to bed that night without having come to any satisfactory conclusion, for the facts at our disposal seemed to contradict each other so flagrantly. Firstly, the train must have been driven from Gloucester Road to the terminus by somebody, and secondly, there was no one in the driver's cab when the train stopped at Finsbury Park.

II.

THE morning's papers gave no new details, save that the dead man had lived at 23, Oakhurst Road, Hammersmith, that he was thirty years of age, had been employed as a driver for the past three years, had an exemplary character, and was an unmarried man. For the rest, the story was simply a recapitulation of the previous night's account.

At ten o'clock, just as Ravenhill was preparing to go to Fleet Street, Inspector Miller was announced. He and Ravenhill were very friendly, and they worked well together on the principle of "give and take." My friend, being primarily a journalist, wanted "copy," and Miller, in return, was only too willing to take advantage of the reporter's genius for investigation.

Miller was not slow in coming to the point.

"What about this Tube case?" he asked as he sat down. "Are you going to do anything in the matter?"

"It's interesting," the reporter replied, in a non-committal way. "How is it going?"

Inspector Miller took a bulky note-book from his pocket.

"Not very well," he admitted. "But it's early yet, and we haven't collected all the clues."

"Seems to me it's a case where you've got to work quickly, or you'll lose your man."

The inspector stared reflectively at Ravenhill.

"Have you been able to form no theory?" the reporter went on.

The inspector opened his note-book.

"I'll tell you how far we've got," he said. "I take it you've read the accounts in the Press. They're all right as far as they go, but there are several new points. If anything, the mystery now seems more inexplicable than ever."

"How so?"

"Well, you remember how contradictory the two main facts were," the policeman went on. "Subsequent investigations increase the contradiction."

He turned over several pages in his note-book.

"Here are the facts to date," he continued. "At three-thirty yesterday afternoon train No. oc621 arrived at Finsbury Park Station, and within fifteen seconds of its stopping the conductor, Hamilton, had looked inside the cab and found it to be empty. Fifteen seconds, mind! On the floor, however, were the driver's tunic, overall, and cap, and the cap had been badly crumpled and had a large bloodstain on the inside. There was a little blood on the floor. Hamilton saw all the passengers alight from the first coach, thinking that Messiger might have left his cab by the connecting door, and the whole station was searched immediately afterwards. But Messiger had disappeared. At five-fifteen Messiger's dead body was picked up in the tunnel about a hundred and fifty yards from Gloucester Road Station, in the direction of South Kensington, and it was minus the garments found earlier in the cab. The head was badly battered."

The inspector paused impressively.

"The great question is," he exclaimed, in a tense voice, "how the devil did that train come into Finsbury Park Station? One might cast doubt on Hamilton's statement, but though I laid plenty of traps for him, he did not falter."

"It seems to me," said the reporter,

quietly, "that the first thing to do is not to be overcome by the apparent impossibility of it all. It happened, therefore it was done. Without doubt, Messiger was murdered, though not necessarily at Gloucester Road."

"You're not suggesting that he was murdered elsewhere?" I protested.

"It's very obvious that he must have been," he retorted. "Don't you agree, inspector?"

"Yes, but——"

"How long does it take for a train to do a hundred and fifty yards?" the reporter asked. "Assuming the train was only doing five or six miles an hour—for she had just started from Gloucester Road—she must have arrived at the point where Messiger's body was found in about a minute. What does that show? That the body was lying handy for the murderer to push it through the door or the window. Isn't that obvious?"

The reporter paused. His thin, pale face became suddenly animated, and I knew that an idea had come to his quick brain.

"I expect you have done all this reconstruction work before this," he said to the inspector. Miller coloured a little, and Ravenhill's eyes sparkled. "Anyhow," he went on, "it won't hurt to do it again. I may be able to give you a fresh idea. We have decided that the murder was committed before the train arrived at Gloucester Road. We want another clue or two before we can imagine exactly where. Unless we get a confession, it is doubtful if we shall ever *know*, but our imagination need not go very far wrong, if it is properly curbed. The murder was undoubtedly a well-planned one, and the murderer probably knew exactly where every phase of it would be carried out. He must have boarded the train at a certain point, awaited his opportunity, murdered Messiger by dealing him a blow on the head with some heavy object, and——"

"But wait a bit," protested the inspector. "It's all very well to imagine things, but you're imagining the obvious. What we want to get at is *how* the murder was committed and how the train was able to go on, stop at the stations, and——"

"But I thought you would have decided that already," the reporter said, patiently. "Obviously someone must have driven the train, and, equally obviously, it was either the murderer or an accomplice. There is only one possible solution in the circumstances, and we must accept that solution or else admit the supernatural."

He paused a moment and lit a cigarette.

"Now," he went on, "I'll reconstruct in earnest. If it sounds fanciful, I can't help it. I've got an idea, and you shall see how your facts bear it out.

"Someone—we'll call him 'X.' till we know his name—wanted Messiger out of the way. The motive doesn't matter yet. Messiger had to be killed, and the plan was to do it in such a way that it would look as though it were merely a case of simple disappearance. I'll explain that in a minute. 'X.' boards the train, say, at Hammersmith, and gets into the front coach. He purposely chooses a slack time of the day, when passengers are few. The conductor of the front part of that train will be able to tell us that somewhere between Hammersmith and Earl's Court the front coach was empty, but what he will not be able to say is that when the last passenger but one alighted at a station—if, indeed, there was more than one passenger between Hammersmith and Earl's Court—'X.' opened the connecting door between the front coach and the driver's cab. It was easy enough to do, for the conductor would be on the platform or engaged in manipulating the doors. Anyhow, I dare swear that the nearest conductor's post was not in the first coach at all, but that he manipulated its doors from the second coach. I believe that there is a short passage between the connecting door and the cab, and this passage, if it exists, would serve as a means of concealment for the murderer until the train was out of the station. But if there is no such passage, it doesn't affect the matter very much. The blow was probably struck from behind, immediately. We have yet to know whether the blow was the cause of death, or whether Messiger was electrocuted, but I think it is obvious that murder was intended."

"But——," I began, but the reporter silenced me with a gesture.

"Hear me out," he said. "As a whole, the story will have more semblance of truth. It is as yet unsupported by evidence, but I defy you to put forward a better solution. Assemble all the solutions you can, and then eliminate all those which are contradicted by the evidence, and you will find that only mine remains.

III.

"NOW, what happened next?" the reporter went on. "You will remember that Messiger's tunic, cap, and overall were found in the cab. Why were all or some of these garments not found on the dead man? Because they were taken off him. The murderer put them on himself, in order that if anyone happened to glance inside the cab window a driver in regulation dress would be seen. After the murder the very first thing the

"You suggest," said the inspector, slowly, "that 'X.,' as you call him, drove that train all the way to Finsbury Park?"

man' did was to take these garments and put them on himself. As a general rule drivers don't wear the tunic in the driving-cab, but only the cap and the overall, so that 'X.' did not have to waste time in putting on the tunic as well. Now, suppose that the murder was committed at or near Baron's Court Station, the change of clothing was effected before the train reached Earl's Court, and there only remained the disposing of the body. On second thoughts, it looks as though Messiger was killed at or nearer Earl's Court than the earlier station, otherwise he would have been dropped overboard before. And the murderer obviously had some knowledge of driving, for it was he who drove the train all the way from the scene of the murder to Finsbury Park; but from the fact that Hamilton, the conductor, detected faulty driving, I judge that 'X.' was not a regular driver, but that he had a sufficient knowledge of electricity to enable him to guess what the controls were. I don't suppose it was a frightfully difficult job, especially if a train is anything like a tram. I believe I could drive a train myself."

"You suggest," said the inspector, slowly, "that 'X.,' as you call him, drove that train all the way to Finsbury Park?"

The reporter nodded.

"It was a 'non-stop' train," the inspector protested, "yet the right stations were missed."

"That was only a matter of studying the indicator at Hammersmith, or wherever the fellow boarded the train," was the reporter's reply.

"But you haven't explained how 'X.' disappeared," I suggested.

"Does it need explanation?" retorted Ravenhill. "He left the train the same way as he entered it—through the coach-door."

"But what of Hamilton's statement?" asked the inspector. He seemed to have set the reporter a poser, but Ravenhill only smiled slightly before he gave his reply.

"Just picture to yourself what happens when a train arrives at a terminus," answered my friend. "Everybody stands up, generally before the train stops, or at least immediately it stops, and turns in the direction of the door. That is to say, the passengers nearest the door which opens into the driver's cab turn their backs upon it. Messiger's murderer had fifteen seconds in which to leave the cab. If there is a connecting passage—as I say I think there is—between cab and coach, so much the easier. If there isn't, he hadn't much time. But, obviously, he must have left that way, for

he was not discovered by the conductor. The cab was empty when Hamilton looked in, and 'X.' must have got quietly into the coach, without attracting attention to himself, and joined the passengers. He would, of course, have removed the tell-tale cap and overall before the train arrived at Finsbury Park. It was a well-thought-out scheme."

The inspector and I were silent. As Ravenhill had admitted, his reconstruction was not supported by evidence, but it had this merit, that it was not contradicted by such evidence as the police had been able to collect. Moreover, the scheme was a possibility; it explained all the difficulties. All the alternatives we could think of were unsatisfactory, inasmuch as they left the enigma of the seemingly driverless train unsolved.

"Everything in your reconstruction seems to depend on whether the train—or, rather, the first coach—was as empty between Hammersmith and Earl's Court as you suppose," the inspector said, reflectively.

"That is so," the reporter admitted. "But Hamilton can easily settle that for you."

"Is it possible that Hamilton was an accomplice?" I suggested.

Both Ravenhill and the inspector shook their heads.

"He had nothing to do with it," Miller declared.

Ravenhill began to fill his pipe.

"As I said," he remarked, "it seems to me that this is a case where we've got to move particularly quickly."

"Why?" asked the inspector.

"How often do you wash your head, or have it shampooed?" the reporter queried.

The inspector stared at his questioner, and a frown came slowly into his face. As for myself, I looked at my friend in surprise. What had Miller's head got to do with the question of speed? Ravenhill smiled at our surprise.

"No offence, inspector," he said. "I was wondering how often 'X.' washed his."

"Well?"

"Oh, can't you see, man?" the reporter exclaimed, brusquely. "Didn't 'X.' wear Messiger's cap, and hadn't that cap got a wet bloodstain in it?"

The inspector jumped excitedly to his feet.

"And I didn't think of it," he cried. "Of course, that stain will be on his hair, and perhaps on his own hat, too." He stopped suddenly. "But if he brushes his hair it'll come off," he added.

"I don't think so," the reporter returned. "Remember, the blow came from behind, and, although you have not said so, I judge that the smear is on the back of the cap. Therefore, the blood will be on the back of 'X.'s' head, where a man does not brush so much, and where a stain would not be noticed. But if the stain has come on to his hat too, it might make matters difficult. 'X.' will see it and wash his head."

"After all," the inspector said, sombrely, "I don't know that that clue is worth much. We don't know who 'X.' is, and the smear is in the nature of evidence for a jury—corroborative evidence for us, that is—and we've got to find the man before we look at his head."

Ravenhill laughed aloud.

"You're a cheerful man to work with," he declared. "Have we achieved nothing so far? Is the reconstruction of no use at all? At least we've established three facts, if not more. 'X.,' if not an electrician, has a considerable knowledge of electricity; he obviously knew Messiger very well; and he must have conceived a very violent hatred for the man he murdered. The murder wasn't the result of a simple quarrel. It had been thought out for days, planned to the minutest detail, and probably partly practised. When you start looking into Messiger's private affairs—and the sooner the better—you'll get your clue. Obviously 'X.' wanted it believed that Messiger had driven his train to Finsbury Park and then quietly disappeared. He had hoped that the body he pushed on to the line would be so mutilated by trains as to be unrecognizable. He wanted to avoid an inquiry into a motive for murder, because there exists a motive which must be a very plain one."

IV.

RAVENHILL'S "reconstruction" of the crime had been a masterly effort, but when he had finished it, it all seemed so easy and obvious. Why had not Miller or myself managed to piece things together in the same way? Ravenhill's story fitted in so wonderfully with the few scraps of evidence which the police had been able to gather together that it was impossible not to believe it.

A little later that morning the three of us left for Gloucester Road Station. The inspector pursued his inquiries among the station staff, and Ravenhill simply listened to all that was said, without volunteering a question. His position as a reporter rather militated against his making inquiries whilst the police were present, and he was content to bide his time. His only remark during the investigation was to suggest to the inspector that he would achieve much more by going to Messiger's home.

We had lunch in a little restaurant near by. The inspector had left us just previously.

and we were alone. Ravenhill said very little during the meal, and I did not venture to question him. At the conclusion, however, he lit a cigarette and then turned to me.

"Like a train journey?" he asked.

I nodded expectantly.

"It'll probably bring no useful result," he said, "but I'd like to travel from Hammersmith to Finsbury Park about the same time as that train went yesterday."

We called at Gloucester Road Station before we left for Hammersmith—for, with plenty of time on our hands, Ravenhill had decided to walk there rather than go by Underground—and left a message for Inspector Miller to the effect that we were to be found at Finsbury Park about half-past three, and that Ravenhill would telephone him from there at that hour.

We boarded a train at Hammersmith and got into the first coach. We found ourselves to be the only passengers. A woman got in at Earl's Court and alighted at South Kensington, but thereafter passengers were more numerous. Ravenhill seemed to be immersed in thought, nor could I contrive to get him to tell me of what he was thinking. When we alighted at Finsbury Park, it appeared to me that Ravenhill had gained little from the journey.

We went into a telephone-box in the station, and Ravenhill called up the station superintendent at Gloucester Road. There was a second ear-piece to the instrument, and I was thus able to listen to my friend's conversation. Inspector Miller, by chance, was in the superintendent's office, and he came to the telephone as soon as it was known that Ravenhill was speaking.

"Afraid your reconstruction was at fault," I heard the inspector say.

The reporter uttered an exclamation.

"Messiger must have been murdered some time later than you suggested," the policeman went on, "and that leaves the riddle of the driverless train unsolved."

"Impossible," the reporter answered warmly.

"But I've proved it, man," the inspector declared. There came a chuckle down the line, and I saw Ravenhill's face suddenly flush.

"How?" he asked, faintly.

"I've been questioning some of the *employés* at various stations on the line," the inspector explained, "and I've definitely established that Messiger was seen driving his train at the time when you suggested he was dead. He was seen and recognized in his cab by an *employé* at Brompton Road, another at Piccadilly Circus, and a third at Leicester Square."

"The devil he was!"

Miller chuckled again.

"Then how do you suppose he was conveyed back to Gloucester Road?" the reporter asked, sarcastically.

"I don't know yet," retorted the policeman. "But, anyhow, he must have driven that train as far as Leicester Square, if not farther."

Suddenly the reporter startled me with a shout. I heard the inspector call out from the other end of the line.

"It's all right," Ravenhill answered. His voice was vibrant with suppressed excitement. "But I believe I've solved the riddle."

I saw his hand shake as he grasped the ear-piece.

"Can you go to Hammersmith right away?" he asked Miller.

"What for?" demanded the inspector. "To go to Messiger's home?"

"Perhaps," was the reply. "But what I want you to do is to wait for me there. I'll come along by train immediately. It's very important."

"All right," I heard the inspector say, after a long pause. "I'll meet you at the booking-office."

We left the telephone-box, I full of questions, the reporter with a beaming face.

"My theory was right," he declared as we went on to the platform again.

"But Messiger was seen afterwards," I protested.

The reporter only smiled enigmatically. I could get him to tell me nothing, and I had perforce to while away the tedium of the journey by reading an early evening paper which I had bought at Finsbury Park. Lacking fresh information, the story of yesterday's tragedy had been hashed up afresh, and the newspaper devoted two columns of space to a review of the now-stale story. A leaderette also dealt with the inexplicable mystery of the driverless train.

I put the paper on the seat wearily. The tragedy was only just a day old, but already it seemed to me that it would be hopeless to expect that the circumstances in which it was enacted would ever be known.

V.

INSPECTOR MILLER was waiting for us at the booking-office when we arrived. He greeted Ravenhill a little sarcastically.

"I'm really afraid your theory will not hold water," he said at once. "Yet another *employé* declares he saw Messiger yesterday. This time it was farther east—at Covent Garden—and Messiger and the other fellow waved to each other as the train went through. The train didn't stop there, you know."

"That's all right," replied the reporter, easily.

The policeman stared. Some of his triumph had sensibly disappeared.

"But——," he began, when Ravenhill pressed his arm.

"All in good time," he said, softly. "Let's go to Oakhurst Road. We'd better take a taxi, for there's need of speed. We don't want 'X.' to wash his head yet."

He piloted the inspector out of the station and hailed a taxi from the rank in King Street. I followed them wonderingly, more nonplussed—if that were possible—than the inspector. Ravenhill gave the address to the driver and we stepped inside.

"You'd better explain," the policeman said, grimly, as he seated himself.

"Wait a bit longer," Ravenhill pleaded. "I'd rather the information came in the course of our investigations at Oakhurst Road. It's only an idea of mine at present, you see, though it's amply borne out by the facts you've been able to get together. I'm positive I'm right."

"What do you want me to do?" the inspector asked, gruffly.

"We shall probably see Messiger's landlady—I think you said he lived in lodgings, didn't you? Just proceed with your questions to her in the ordinary way."

OAKHURST ROAD was a dreary-looking street towards Shepherd's Bush, and No. 23 was flanked on either side by houses as monotonously ugly as itself. We were bidden to enter by the landlady, whose name we learnt to be Mrs. Flower.

"He left here early in the morning," she said, in answer to Miller's first question. "That was the last I see of 'im."

"Did he behave in any way unusual?" the inspector asked next.

"He seemed a bit 'appy like," replied Mrs. Flower. "He told me 'e was goin' to git married next month."

I heard Ravenhill breathe quickly. The inspector looked round at him and then turned to the woman again.

"Do you know if Messiger had any relatives living?" he asked.

"Yes, there's two brothers," replied the landlady, "but one is in Australia."

"And the other?"

"He's in London—lives somewhere over Notting Hill way," she answered.

Upon a request from the policeman, Mrs. Flower conducted us up to the dead man's room. It was simply and cheaply furnished with a single bed, a wash-hand-stand, a chest of drawers surmounted with a rectangular mirror, a small table, and two chairs.

"Mr. Messiger always 'ad his meals with us," Mrs. Flower volunteered.

I was waiting for the reporter to give a sign that he had discovered what he wanted, but I was so far doomed to disappointment. He prowled round the tiny room, examining everything closely.

"This is Messiger, I suppose?" he said presently, picking up a photograph of a man and a surprisingly pretty girl.

"That's 'im," the landlady replied. "That's 'is girl with him. Good-looking, ain't she?"

"She is," admitted Ravenhill, and then, softly: "Inspector, we're looking for a motive. Do you think this one's any good?" And he pointed to the picture of the girl.

"You're only guessing," Miller replied, looking at the landlady to see if she had overheard.

"We must guess a bit, until we get a definite clue," the reporter said.

"Thought you'd got one!"

"Perhaps I have. Who do you suppose——? No, I'll put it this way." He turned to Mrs. Flower, who had retired discreetly to the other end of the room. "Mrs. Flower," he said, in a winning voice, "I suppose Messiger had been with you a long time?"

"Ten year, sir."

"And I expect he looked upon you as a mother rather than a landlady."

Mrs. Flower dabbed at her eyes with her apron.

"He did that, sir," she sniffed. "Why, only yes'day mornin' 'e says to me, 'Mrs, F.,' he says—he always called me Mrs. F., sir—you've been more like a mother to me than me own was, and I wish I didn't 'ave to leave yer.' He was talkin' of 'is marriage, sir, when 'e said it."

"I expect he often spoke to you about—about the girl, didn't he?"

"He did that, sir."

"She must have had many admirers."

Mrs. Flower became confidential.

"Between you and me, sir, she wasn't good enough for 'im," she declared. "She was a bad lot. Kept 'im 'anging about for months before she'd make up her mind."

The reporter's eyes sparkled.

"Couldn't she decide?"

"That's about it, sir," agreed the landlady. "You see, 'im and 'is brother—the one in Notting Hill, I mean—came up to London together, and this girl came from the same place—Eastbourne, I think it was. They've both been in love with her for years and——"

"What is the brother?" exclaimed the inspector, suddenly. "I mean, what is his profession?"

Mrs. Flower looked startled, and an

instant's suspicion showed in her shrewd eyes.

" 'E's something to do with wireless, sir," she replied at length. " 'E fixed up a wireless thing here for my husband only last week."

The policeman and the reporter exchanged a quick glance.

" D'you know his address ? " asked the inspector.

" I don't, sir. But if you care to wait a bit, you can ask him yourself. He sent me a letter last night, saying he would call here this evening at six about his brother."

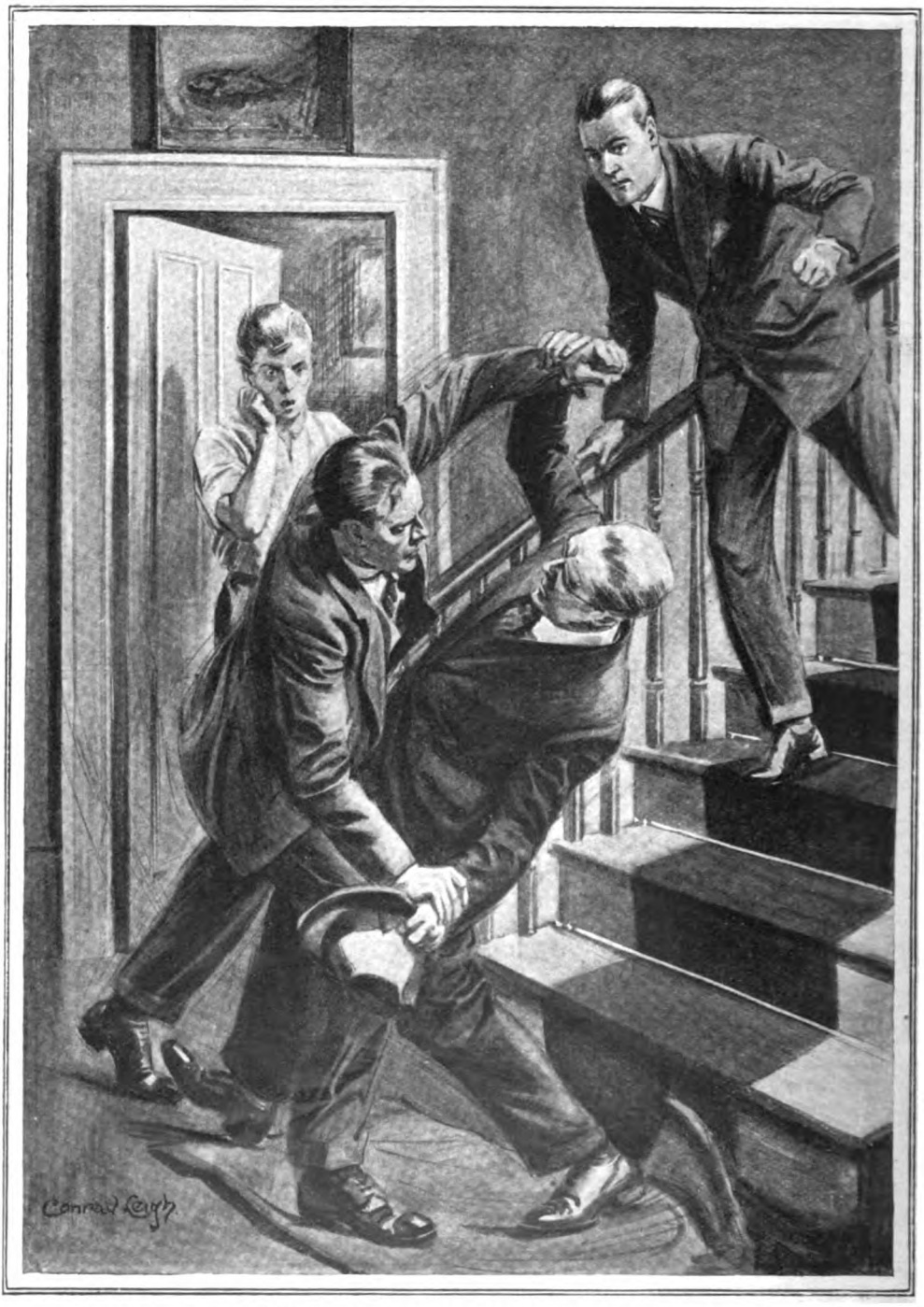
I looked at my watch. It wanted but a quarter of an hour to six o'clock. By now I had been able to see the trend of the reporter's questions, and at the moment when the inspector had asked Mrs. Flower as to the brother's profession light had come to me.

" When he comes," said Miller, in a careless voice, " bring him up here right away, will you ? And don't say there's anyone here besides yourself."

The landlady left the room. Ravenhill turned quickly to the inspector.

" Is this safe ? " he asked. " I mean, will

" This is Messiger, I suppose ? " Ravenhill said.
" That's 'im," the landlady replied. " That's 'is girl with him."



He did not wait. With a bound he had reached me, and for a brief second he and I rolled together on the floor.

she hint to him that the police are here ? "

" I've thought of that," was the reply. " But I should imagine that the man feels himself secure enough, even if she does. Anyhow, one of us can easily lean over the stairs and listen."

" Surely suspicion ought to have fallen on him before now," I ventured. " I take it you knew of his existence ? "

" He made some inquiries at a police-station last night, I believe," the inspector said, a little stiffly. " But I don't see why suspicion should have fallen on him until now. And even now——"

" There's not much doubt about it now, inspector," the reporter interposed. " Remember the *employés* who thought they saw the dead Messiger east of Gloucester Road yesterday afternoon. Brothers are often alike, be they twins or not, and at a distance a likeness need not be too exact to deceive anyone."

VI.

THE expected visitor came late. The inspector went out on to the landing as soon as the knock was heard. He came back in less than a minute and announced that Mrs. Flower had shown her visitor into the sitting-room on the ground floor.

" I suppose she had to," he added. " It would have seemed suspicious had she brought him straight here."

Ravenhill looked at the inspector anxiously.

" We've got very little evidence, you know," he said, warningly. " Supposing there's no blood on his head ? "

The policeman frowned.

" That's slim evidence, too," he said at length. " It's ten chances to one against his wearing the same hat to-day that he——"

" Let's take the chance and examine it," the reporter suggested. " Did he take it into the sitting-room with him ? "

" No ; he hung it up in the hall."

" A stain on the inside is a thing he'd easily not observe," I said. " Let me try and get it while he's in here."

The inspector gave a reluctant consent. I had given myself a difficult task, and I was in some concern as to how I should accomplish it. Clearly I must not leave the room whilst Messiger was in it, or he would suspect something. It must be done now, or, at least, I must not be in the room when he came in. I looked down the short passage and saw an open door. At the same moment came the sound of voices in the hall down below. Indicating to the reporter what I was going to do, I slipped out of the room, went along the passage, and entered the open door. It was a bedroom, and fortunately unoccupied.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs. I quickly closed the door, lest I should be seen, and waited. Then I opened the door again and peeped out. There was no sound but a dull murmur of voices, and as I leaned over the banisters I could see a soft hat on a peg in the hall. As quick as thought I ran softly down the stairs and seized the hat. With a heart loudly beating, I peered inside. As the inspector had said, it was ten to one against there being a stain there, but the odd chance had it.

Even as I saw the stain, there was a sudden shout. I turned round, the tell-tale hat in my hand, and saw a man standing in the sitting-room doorway. So he had not gone upstairs after all ! But the shout had not come from him. Ravenhill was leaning over the banisters, seeking to see what was happening. Now he and the inspector dashed down the stairs. Messiger did not wait. With a bound he had reached me, and for a brief second he and I rolled together on the floor. Mrs. Flower was screaming at the top of her voice, and the thud of blows made a pandemonium of sound.

Messiger was on his feet, and I remained on the ground with a broken wrist. He made a dash at the front door, but I managed to jerk out a foot. He fell heavily as I tripped him up, and at the same moment the inspector and Ravenhill threw themselves upon him.

VII.

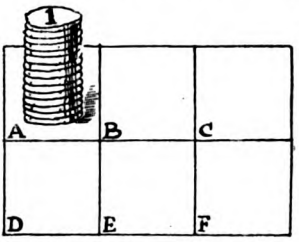
AT his trial the full story came out, for, finding he had not a chance of escape, Messiger made a clean breast of the whole affair. Ravenhill's masterly " reconstruction " had not been faulty in a single detail, and Inspector Miller had to admit that when reconstruction is possible it is the biggest aid towards solving a problem that a detective can employ. He chaffed Ravenhill with the fact that the reporter was largely imaginative, but my friend replied, with a great deal of truth, that an orderly imagination, turned to work in proper channels, will often supply what is lacking in evidence. To eliminate all possibilities which are not supported by facts is to narrow the field considerably, and it was this process of elimination, carried out not only in reconstruction but in other parts of his investigations, which enabled the reporter to achieve so much success.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

725.—TRANSFERRING THE COUNTERS.

DIVIDE a sheet of paper into six compartments, as shown in the illustration, and place a pile of fifteen counters, numbered consecutively 1, 2, 3 . . . 15 downwards, in compartment A. The puzzle is to transfer the complete pile, in the fewest possible moves, to compartment F. You can move the counters one at a time to any compartment, but may never place a counter on one that bears a smaller number than itself. Thus, if you place 1 on B and 2 on C, you can then place 1 on 2, but not 2 on 1.



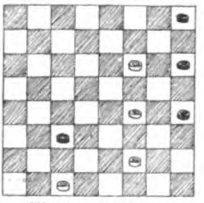
726.—PROHIBITION AGAIN.

IN No. 707 we considered how to measure one quart of beer into each of two measures—a 7-quart and a 5-quart measure—from a barrel containing 120 quarts, any amount of waste being allowed. It was intended, and generally understood, that we could not pour any liquid back into the barrel. That action is another step forward. Let us then try to discover the fewest possible manipulations under the same conditions as before, except that we may now pour back into the barrel. (By the way, the second solution that I previously gave takes the same number of moves as the first method, the "11 transactions" being a slip for "10," through hastily adding in the top line showing the starting position.)

727.—A DRAUGHTS PROBLEM.

HERE is a pretty little draughts problem that every beginner should find instructive and entertaining. It is not difficult.

BLACK—4 pieces.



WHITE—4 pieces.
White to play and win.

728.—THE TRAMPS AND THE BISCUITS.

FOUR tramps stole a box of biscuits which they agreed to share equally next morning. In the night, while the others slept, one man ate exactly a quarter of the number of biscuits, except the odd one left over, which he threw to their dog. Later a second man hit on the same idea and ate one-quarter of what remained and gave the odd biscuit to the dog. The third and fourth men did precisely the same in turn, taking each a quarter and throwing the odd biscuit to the dog. In the morning they divided what remained equally amongst them and again gave the dog the odd biscuit. What is the smallest number of biscuits there could have been? I have given in my "Canterbury Puzzles" a general formula for any number of men, but I will ask the reader here to discover the smallest possible number of biscuits if the four men proceeded in exactly the same way, except that there shall be *no* biscuit left over for the poor dog at the *final* division. This is a different puzzle.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

721.—CHANGING PLACES.

PLAY as follows: 1. P—Q R 4, P—Q R 4; 2. R—R 3, R—R 3; 3. R—Q Kt 3, R—Q B 3; 4. R—Kt 6, R—B 6; 5. R—R 6, R—R 6; 6. R—R 8, R—R 8; 7. P—K R 4, P—K R 4; 8. R—R 3, R—R 3; 9. R—K Kt 3, R—K B 3; 10. R—Kt 6, R—B 6; 11. R—K R 6, R—K R 6; 12. R—R 8, R—R 8; 13. Kt—K B 3, Kt—Q B 3; 14. Kt—B 3, Kt—B 3; 15. Kt—Q 4, Kt—K 4; 16. Kt—K 4, Kt—Q 4; 17. Kt—Q B 6, Kt—Q B 6; 18. P—Q Kt 3, P—Q 4; 19. P—K Kt 3, K—Q 2; 20. Kt—B 6 ch., K—Q 3; 21. Kt—Q Kt 8, P—K Kt 3; 22. P—K 4, P—Q Kt 3; 23. Q—K 2, Kt—Kt 8; 24. Q—Kt 5, Kt—B 6 ch.; 25. K—K 2, Kt—Kt 8 ch.; 26. K—K 3, B—R 6; 27. Kt—Kt 8, P—K 3; 28. Q—K 8, K—B 4; 29. B—R 6, K—Kt 5; 30. P—Q 3, Q—B 3; 31. B—B 8, Q—Q B 6; 32. K—B 4, Q—K 8; 33. B—R 3 ch., K—B 6; 34. K—K 5, B—R 3; 35. B—B 8, B—B 8; 36. K—B 6, K—Q 7; 37. K—K 7, K—Q 8; 38. K—Q 8, B—B 8. The kings only make 7 moves, the bishops 2, and the knights 4 moves each, the fewest possible on even an empty board. The rooks only make 5 moves each and the queens 3, and I do not think these numbers can possibly be reduced without increasing the pawn moves. The solution thus comes out much more elegant and satisfying than I had expected.

722.—PICKLEMINSTER TO QUICKVILLE.

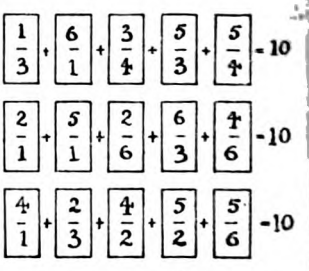
THERE are two possible distances that will fit the conditions—210 miles and 144 miles, only I barred out the latter by the words, "at an ordinary rate." With 144 miles A would run 140 miles while B and D ran 4, so if the latter went 2 m.p.h., the former would have to go 70 m.p.h.—rates which are certainly not "ordinary"! With 210 miles B and D go half the speed of A, and C goes three-quarters the speed of A, so you can give them reasonable rates.

723.—THE DISHONEST DAIRYMAN.

IF THIN MILK BRINGS ILLICIT TIN,
I THINK I'LL SKIM IT, MIX IT, TILL IT'S THIN.

724.—DOMINO FRACTIONS.

THE illustration shows how to arrange the dominoes so that each of the three rows of five sum to 10. Give every fraction the denominator 60. Then the numerators of the fractions used must sum to 1800, or 600 in each row, to produce the sum 10. The selection and adjustment require a little thought and cunning.



713.—NEW WORD CHAIN.

MANY readers have sent me their attempts at this pastime, but all are beaten by Mr. William Brown, who has succeeded in forming a chain of 173 words! Some of the words are obscure, but I allowed considerable latitude.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

1/6 NET

G. WODEHOUSE H. de VERE STACPOOLE W. W. JACOB
WINSTON CHURCHILL ARNOLD BENNETT
RITTEN AUSTIN "SAPPER" H. A. VACHEL

Goes all over the World

"Eat only

SHARP'S
SUPER-KREEM
TOFFEE

the best"

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER of

The STRAND MAGAZINE

December 1924

Guy asked his groom:
"Why is it that every horse becomes restless when I go near him?"

An incident from H. A. Vachell's story, "The Dissemblers." (See page 533.)

BECKFORD TOOK THE FENCE IN HIS STRIDE. SOMEHOW, GUY, WITH ONE HAND ON THE POMMEL, REMAINED IN THE SADDLE.

(See page 540.)

THE DISSEMBLERS

BY

H. A. VACHELL

ILLUSTRATED BY C. E. BROCK R.I.

I.

NOBODY was more surprised than Guy Sandilands when a distant kinsman, whom he had only met half-a-dozen times, left the young man a snug property in Melshire, where the shooting is good and the hunting even better. In the centre of a small park stood a delightful old manor-house, not too big. And everything—farms, stables, cottages—was in apple-pie order. Death duties, of course, were high, but Guy, who was in the jute business when his kinsman died, had capital of his own (and a bit over) wherewith to settle these in full.

He told himself that he stood "on velvet."

And he stood alone. No impecunious relations to worry and bleed him. His mother, who lived in London, was amply provided for; his two sisters had married well.

Nevertheless, these three ladies were unanimous in declaring that Guy must marry, and quite willing to find him a suitable life's partner. He laughed at them cheerily.

"I shall find her—in time."

He entered into possession of his kingdom in April, and the neighbours hastened to call, and to entertain him.

II.

AMONGST these neighbours, all racy of the good Melshire soil, were Sir Gilbert Fonthill, of Fonthill Court, and young Nethercoate of Nethercoats. Sir Gilbert was an ex-M.F.H., who had carried the horn of the Fonthill Vale Hounds in pre-war days. All the Fonthills were followers of the chase, rain or shine. They took the field on hunters, if they could afford them, or afoot, or on bicycles, or in cars. Sir Gilbert had sons and daughters, nephews and nieces. And each, you may be sure, had been "blooded" as soon as he or she could sit on a pony, properly "entered" to fox. Young Nethercoate was of the same sporting kidney, interested in the management of his estate, which marched with Guy's property, and good at games. Accordingly, within a short time the two men became firm friends.

It was Jack Nethercoate who dropped the first brick upon Guy's toes.

"Of course you hunt?"

"What?"

The monosyllable betrayed him.

"Reynard. Old Charley, bless him!"

"Oh! Stupid of me. I've never hunted foxes. I've never ridden anythin, except a rocking-horse; and a bad toss off that when I was three wrecked my nerve."

Jack eyed him anxiously.

"But, my dear fellow, you can't live down here and not hunt. Everybody hunts."

"I quite understand that it is my duty to provide foxes."

"Dash it, you must hunt! Good Lord! you'll be bored stiff if you don't. I'll find you a safe conveyance, and you can hack about till cubbing begins. And then—all will be well."

Guy looked dubious.

It is probable that his stables would have remained empty, if he had not fallen desperately in love with Miss Esther Fonthill. Talking with her and her people forced him into the saddle. Esther smiled upon him, but—as Guy pointed out to Jack Nethercoate—she smiled as beguilingly upon Jack himself, a hardened bachelor. Esther persuaded Guy to "walk" a couple of foxhound puppies. It was the right thing to do, and that was the end of it—or the beginning of what inevitably followed.

Jack said: "You must talk horse and hound to little Esther."

"Tell me to talk Choctaw."

"You'll pick up the patter all right. Hark to Sir Gilbert."

Copyright, 1924, by H. A. Vachell.

He seized his racket, and leaped nimbly in front of Esther. "It's footwork, you see—just footwork."

Guy harked to Sir Gilbert and read sporting novels.

We must admit that he was making progress, when he observed mournfully to Jack:

"I'm not getting any forrarder with Esther."

"You wait till cubbing begins."

A safe con eyance had been found for Guy, an aged hunter named Beckford, with perfect mouth and manners, a gentleman. What he thought of Guy he kept to himself. Guy asked his groom who was teaching him to ride:—

"Why is it that every horse becomes restless when I go near him?"

The groom, a Melshire man, replied caustically: "I reckons they knows more'n we thinks for. You treats Beckford too polite-like. Give 'un a good smack on his quarters, and dig heels into 'un, when he's nappy."

Beckford was inclined to be "nappy" when Guy overdid the politeness. Beckford had perfect control of Guy, but, in the circumstances, didn't abuse his powers. Perhaps the old horse knew that he had a very cushy job although, for obvious reasons, he was kept short of corn.

In July Guy was confronted with tragedy. One of the puppies had a nasty red patch upon its little Mary.

"What is that?" asked an ignoramus of Josephs, the groom.

"It be mange."

"Mange? Do you know anything about mange?"

"Mange," replied Josephs, portentously, "be an insec', yas, an insec' so small that you can't see 'un wi' a microbe."

The puppy was treated successfully by a local "vet" sworn to secrecy; the hideous fact never leaked out, but the "vet" muttered: "Walking valuable puppies is a serious responsibility."

Guy agreed with him.

III.

TOWARDS the end of July, Sir Gilbert and Lady Fonthill gave a big tennis party, to which Guy was invited. There were only two courts, and Esther was not in tennis kit. Guy had anticipated with pleasure a set with Esther, no mean performer. Sir Gilbert greeted him warmly, saying in a lower tone:—

"My girls tell me that you're hot stuff. Bide a wee; and I'll put you into a good men's four."

At this moment the dissembling, fraught with so many consequences, began to burgeon. It ought to be stated emphatically

that neither Guy nor Esther was "hot stuff" at dissembling. Let us reckon them as novices. Guy saw that Esther, looking delightfully frocked and distractingly pretty, was standing close to her father. He raised his voice :—

"It's a confounded nuisance, Sir Gilbert, but you must count me out."

"Eh, what ?"

"I'm a bit crocked."

This was Guy's first essay at "patter" with the ex-M.F.H.

"Crocked ?"

"Went short on the off fore on my way here." Sir Gilbert nodded approvingly. Much encouraged, Guy continued : "Back tendon out of whack. Nothing serious. I was shot in the leg after Mons."

This was true ; it was also true that Guy suffered occasional twinges. Sir Gilbert said genially :—

"Esther was V.A.D. during the last six months of the war. Hi ! Esther ! Oh, there you are. I hand over this wounded warrior to you."

Together Guy and Esther strolled away from the crowd. Guy felt constrained to limp slightly.

"Does your leg hurt you ?" asked the maid.

"Not so much as it did."

"Perhaps we had better sit down."

Guy assented. More, he strategically manœuvred Esther in the direction of a bench under the shade of a fine copper beech. They sat down and looked at each other.

"When I've rested up, Miss Esther, it would be most awfully nice of you to show me your stables."

"Not much to see there yet, Mr. Sandilands."

"But—they're model stables, aren't they ?"

"Father thinks so. Of course you hunt ?" Guy replied evasively :—

"I'm looking forward to hunting."

"Have you ever been out with our hounds ?"

"Never."

"The country is trappy. Father says that if a man can really 'go' here, he can ride anywhere. I dare say you like being in the air."

Guy guessed that "being in the air" was the right "patter" for jumping obstacles. He had seen the obstacles—brooks, flying fences, bank-and-ditch-doubles, post-and-rails——! The more he looked at them in July the less—so he told himself—would he like them in November.

"I'm a duffer," admitted Guy. To cover a slight confusion, because he could see that Esther did not believe him to be a duffer, he dexterously switched the talk from himself to her : "I know that you go like a bird."

Sir Gilbert, beholding smart breeches and gaiters, said to Esther : "Young Sandilands shapes well. He has a leg for a boot."

"Who told you that?"

"You're a Fonthill."

Esther blushed. She did not go like a bird. It is significant that something within her revolted against dissembling with this clear-eyed, open-faced young man. She murmured hastily:—

"I have a wonderful gee—clever as a cat—never puts me down—always a leg to spare, but—I'm not a thruster, Mr. Sandilands. I—I don't ride as my sisters ride."

"You must have amazing pluck." As she remained silent, still blushing, he said, ardently:—

"I admire pluck more than anything else. And that, of course, is why hunting is such a tremendous asset to England. It—it calls into play the great qualities, doesn't it?"

"Ye-es," admitted Esther.

"Judgment, for instance. One must ride with judgment?"

Esther nodded.

"Decision, too. You spot your place and go for it bald-headed."

He was warming to his work, so Esther reflected.

"I can't answer for the bald-headed, Mr Sandilands."

"I should think not." He stared audaciously at some brown curls beneath a becoming hat. Esther, concerned for his safety in November, said quickly:—

"Some thrusters who don't know our country come to sad grief—rotten banks and all that. There is the flying country and the crawling country. None of us regards you as a stranger, Mr. Sandilands. Father was telling us the other night about your wonderful great-grandfather who broke his neck jumping a stiff post-and-rails when he was eighty-one. It was a glorious finish at eighty-one, but not at——" She paused.

"Twenty-nine," said Guy, adding tactfully: "rising thirty." He had never forgotten his great-grandfather's end. Guy's father, who succumbed to a neglected cold, had spoken of that end as a warning. Guy's grandmother had said: "He was not, I fear, prepared to meet his Maker."

Esther continued brightly:—

"Considering the country, we don't have very many bad accidents."

"I say, Miss Esther, you're putting the wind up me. I feel as if I were the apex of the world's pyramid of funks."

Had he spoken in a more convincing tone Esther might have replied: "We stand on that apex together." Unfortunately, she had heard such statements before from men whom she knew to be Bayards of the chase. Sir Gilbert, a first-flighter, affirmed that he rode over certain fences with his heart in his mouth. To test this young man further, she continued:—

When Esther opened her eyes, her head was on Guy's knees.

When the port was brought in Sir Gilbert proposed the toast of the evening: "Fox-hunting!"

"You must be extra careful in November. It's blind 'going' till the middle of December. You have bought, I hear, a fine performer."

"Beckford is all right; he knows his job much better than I do. Somehow it's in the air down here that life without horses is a tame affair. You agree with me, I'm sure?"

"It *is* in the air here," Esther admitted.

They were hovering on the brink of discovering each other, when loud applause from the lawn challenged attention. Four good men and true were giving a fine exhibition. Immediately, rejoicing to feel ground firm beneath his feet, Guy began to talk of tennis. He had seen the cracks at Wimbledon; he had played with some of them. Presently, to illustrate a stroke, he jumped from the bench, seized his racket, and leaped nimbly in front of Esther.

"It's footwork, you see—just footwork."

"Gracious! But your poor leg——"

A poet has told us that we pay the price of lies by being constrained to lie on still. Guy, being a novice at lying, quite forgot that he had lied.

"My leg——?"

He flew the scarlet of confusion, and an unscrupulous maiden, watching him slyly, said pitifully:—

"Is it very bad?"

Guy burst out laughing, wiped a heated brow, sat down and whispered:—

"There is nothing the matter with it. I saw that you weren't playing, and I—I wanted to talk with you."

A faint exclamation escaped her. Unable to meet his glowing eyes, she murmured:—

"You told me you were in the jute business. Surely the Diplomatic Service would have suited your great talents better?"

"My leg will hurt abominably, Miss Esther, if you pull it."

Esther stood up, smiling.

"You must play in the next men's set."

He did.

IV.

HE returned to his ancient manor-house and dined alone. Upon the walls of the dining-room hung family portraits, and amongst them that of his great-grandfather, who broke his neck at the ripe age of eighty-one jumping stiff timber. Jack Nethercoate declared that Guy had a look of his great-grandsire, acclaimed by all Melshire as the right sort. Each possessed a firm, salient chin and nose that inspired respect.

"Horses were not 'nappy' with you," thought Guy.

Before he left Fonthill Court, Esther did show him the model stables, and further talk, not about stables, established the fact that they had much in common. Esther revealed herself as a lover of the country she rode over, a nymph fragrant of the fields and woods, Arcadian, artless, fresh as dew. Just the very girl to be mistress of a charming manor-house. And yet, alas, the essential misunderstanding remained. Man and maid believed firmly that the other was mad keen about the sport of kings. Guy said to himself miserably :—

"The darling will spot me as a mug and a liar when she sees me in the pigskin."

That night, Esther, turning her pretty head upon an uneasy pillow, reflected as miserably :—

"What will Mr. Sandilands think of me when he finds out that I'm a funker?"

She had not seen Guy in the pigskin. He and Josephs hacked about in the cool mornings, rarely adventuring beyond Guy's ring fence, and never over it. Very small "leps" were put up in a paddock behind Guy's stables. Over these Beckford jumped with such consummate ease and smoothness that a tiny measure of confidence in himself and his steed emboldened Guy to go on dissembling with Esther. Thanks to the kindly Jack, a novice bought the right "kit." Afoot he looked a "workman." Sir Gilbert, beholding smart breeches and gaiters at the local Pony Show, said to Esther :—

"Young Sandilands shapes well. He has a leg for a boot."

But the malicious imps of comedy saw to it that the pair got "no forrarder," because Truth hid herself in her well. Guy was something of a "thruster" apart from the hunting field. He would certainly have prosecuted his suit with dash and persistence if the obstacles in Melshire had been less forbidding. He said to himself: "If she will have me after she sees me dead lag of the hunt, we shall be as happy as larks." Esther, pondering things over in her heart, came to another optimistic conclusion: "Guy" (she thought of him as Guy) "will push along; he won't see me, because I shall be behind him. And then—*perhaps*——"

He told her that great pressure had been brought to bear upon him. As the owner of fox coverts, as the great-grandson of a hero, *the hunt button had been sent to him!* Jack Nethercoate said that this was a tremendous compliment, adding :—

"You must appear in pink at the opening meet."

"I daren't," faltered Guy.

"I say you must; and I shall see to it that you are turned out smartly. You will want two red coats, *and an evening coat.*"

"I have something disagreeable to tell you," she began.

"Help——!"

"A horseman should be a credit to his gee. You leave everything to me."

"Thank you," gasped Guy.

Esther said to him :—

"Are you going to hunt four days a week?"

"With one horse?"

"But you have two good 'uns. Are you looking out for a third?"

"Ye-es. What I want is hard to find."

Esther nodded, making certain that Guy, with an ample income, would buy the best. He had paid a biggish price for Beckford. The mere fact that he had bought a famous performer, a sometime winner of point-to-point races, established Guy in his own neighbourhood as a fellow to be reckoned with. The horse ridden by Josephs—which Guy dared not mount—was also favourably known with the F.V.H.

Esther put another nasty question :—

"Does Beckford rush his fences?"

Now Beckford, wise beast, disdaining the absurd "leps" in the paddock, trotted calmly up to them, cocked his ears, and popped over with a minimum of effort.

"Rush his fences? I—I don't think so.'

"I asked the question," explained Esther, "because Becky has been raced a lot. Father says it's a mistake to race hunters. So often you turn a fine hunter into a third-rate racehorse."

"Just so," assented Guy, knowing nothing about it, but vaguely alarmed. Did Becky rush his fences? How could he find out? He would ask Josephs. He did the next morning.

"Ah-h-h!" said Josephs, devoted to both his horses. "Beckford be quality, zur. Do 'ee be sure o' this—he'll keep his nose close to 'ounds when they be runnin'. Don't 'ee worry. I understands. You sit snug in saddle, and old 'orse'll do the rest; a rare ride he be, to be sure."

This was not comforting. But, on the other hand, Guy felt daily more at home in a well-polished saddle, and Josephs took infinite pains with his "seat" in it. The pair adventured as far as Fonthill Court one morning, and all the Fonthills beheld Guy on a good horse. Sir Gilbert was visibly impressed. He said to Esther :—

"Young Sandilands on that horse will show some of us the way."

To please Guy, Esther repeated to him what her father predicted. A more observant young man, more knowledgeable about all that pertains to the chase, might have noticed that Esther, not an Echo, invariably quoted Sir Gilbert when hunting happened to be the theme of conversation. Guy inferred that Esther, apart from her father, expected great things of him.

V.

CUBBING began.

Beckford knew all about cubbing, and was slightly bored by it. Now and again he reached at his bridle when hounds were bustling a cub, but otherwise he behaved like a gentleman.

To make things easier for Guy, Fate ordained that Esther was in Scotland. She didn't come out till the opening meet, and on the first Monday in November anything may happen, however blind the country is.

Something, quite unexpected, did happen.

Hounds met in the flying country at Barkford Inn and drew a famous covert. Outside that covert Guy met Esther and was uproariously glad to see her after a six weeks' absence. He was so absorbed in her, so delighted to perceive that she seemed equally glad to see him, that he wandered on with her, away from the rest of the field, to the left of the covert.

They did not talk about hunting. Esther was riding her own horse, well-exercised during her absence by a groom. Was it significant that Esther's mare "nosed" Beckford affectionately, and that Beckford displayed no resentment? Now Esther knew this covert as she knew her own hand. Nine times out of ten foxes broke away from it on the right. More—the covert, unless you stuck to the rides, was not easy to draw properly. Hounds objected to thick brambles. The huntsman went in with his hounds; the first whipper-in galloped to the far right corner. A cub might dash across a few fields into another covert just as thick at that time of year.

A whimper, another whimper, and then a full chorus, proclaimed a find. Esther smiled. She and Guy could take their time.

Beckford cocked his ears, as a fine dark fox slipped out of the brambles not fifty yards away.

"Ought I to halloa?" asked Guy. He knew enough to lift his new top-hat. But none saw him.

"Can you?" asked Esther, trying to quiet a restless mare.

"I've never done it."

"You may be slated if you do."

The leading hound bounded out of the covert, followed by the body of the pack. They hit the line with a crash and raced across a large grass field.

Beckford followed them.

Esther's mare followed Beckford.

To a true thruster this would have been a memorable moment. To get well away with staunch hounds over a grass country, no wire, flying fences, blind but negotiable, and a screaming scent.

Worth a guinea a second!

Guy's first impulse was to jam his hat over his head. Then he gripped the flaps of his saddle as he had never gripped them before. Beckford strode on, taking his place automatically well to the left of the flying pack. Guy couldn't stop him, and at the moment he didn't attempt to stop him. He obeyed Joseph's admonitions—hands low, sit still, look ahead.

Looking ahead, he saw a fence and no gate. The fence was not formidable. He glanced back, and nearly fell out of the slippery pigskin. Esther was forty yards behind him. Not another soul was in sight. The fox, as rarely happens, had diddled the field and the hunt servants.

Guy thought agonizingly: "It's a thousand to three I shall cut a voluntary" (he had mastered his "patter") "at this fence. Esther will administer first aid."

Beckford picked the easiest place. Esther reflected: "Guy knows all about it. I *must* follow him, if I can. I—I *will* follow him."

Beckford took the fence in his stride. Somehow, Guy, with one hand on the pommel, remained in the saddle. Not a creditable performance, but Esther, being behind him, couldn't see the hand on the pommel nor Guy asprawl Beckford's neck as they landed well into the next field.

More grass, and a convenient gap in the distance. He glanced back. Esther was well over, too. What had Josephs said about a horse taking hold of his bit? Yes. "Kid him, zur; press 'un; give 'un his head; and then a pull; make 'un bend his neck; and then you'll have 'un in hand."

What counsels of perfection!

Still, it might be done on rising ground with a gap as encouragement. Guy pressed Beckford with his blunted spurs. Beckford, slightly surprised, responded, lengthening his stride. As they neared the gap Guy spoke to the old horse, and managed to move the bit. Beckford was "kidded." He trotted up to the gap and through it.

Hounds were a field ahead.

Esther's breathless voice was heard, as she cantered alongside:—

"Ought we to stop hounds?"

"We can't," Guy replied.

THEY sped on and on, Esther dropping behind. She dared not ride in a thruster's pocket. Another easy fence crowning a slope. Below lay the cream of the F.V.H. and the Barkford brook. Esther knew, of course, every inch of the country; much of it belonged to her father. Still—hairy fences and blind ditches in early November! Dare she suggest to this stranger that she, a coward, should pilot him?

By this time Guy's blood was circulating torrentially. He was wearing red and saw red, the red of Reynard, and he saw in the mid-distance the pollards fringing Barkford brook. The turf was sound under Beckford's hoofs, ideal "going."

A farmer's boy opened a gate.

The luck of this overwhelmed Guy. But he hadn't the time or the opportunity to fish half a crown out of his pocket. He roared at the astonished yokel:—

"God bless you!"

Beckford was taking hold again. No kidding could be practised downhill. At the next fence, landing on too soft ground, he pecked slightly. Biff! Guy's nose met a hard neck, and something warm and brackish flowed into Guy's mouth.

"Nearly done—did she see that?"

Esther, collecting her horse for an awkward drop, did not see him. She was losing ground, but filled with admiration of her pilot, giving no credit to Becky.

She, too, saw the line of pollards and marshy meadows beyond. Obviously Guy meant to have the brook, although there was a ford farther on. How could he know about the ford? If she turned left-handed priceless minutes would be lost. Would her pilot pick the best place? Not he. She saw Beckford lengthening his stride and Guy, slightly hunched up in the saddle, leaning forward, apparently urging his steed to high endeavour.

They were over.

Trembling with fear, but overmastered by Cupid, Esther followed.

Safely across, on heavy ground, Guy was able to pull up Beckford. Novice though he was, he knew that he had leaped a really big obstacle. All the triumph of that notable achievement oozed from every pore as he realized the danger to Esther, not so well mounted, upon a horse not yet in hunting condition.

The mare did her best, but the water was too wide. Mare and maid crashed upon a rotten bank. Esther was flung to the bulrushes, and lay amongst them even as Moses.

Hounds vanished.

When Esther opened her eyes, her head was on Guy's knees.

"I'm quite all right," said Esther.

Guy helped her to her feet, but kept a supporting arm about her waist.

"Are you sure?"

"The—the wind was knocked out of me. Where are the horses?"

Guy said, grimly: "Becky means to see the end of this hunt, and your mare seems to be attached to him."

He glanced about him; they were alone.

"Darling Esther——!"

" Mr. Sandilands—— ! "

Before she could protest he had kissed her.

" I adore you——"

" Guy—— ! "

He went on kissing her, and presently she was kissing him.

Twenty minutes later the huntsman rode up, followed by the field. When Sir Gilbert had satisfied himself that Esther was none the worse for her toss, he reprimanded her sharply for letting go of the reins. Young Sandilands, of course, believing the young lady to be seriously hurt, had broken no unwritten laws in letting *his* horse escape. Young Sandilands, invited to dinner that night, begged to be allowed to remain with Miss Esther, and permission to do so was graciously accorded. Sir Gilbert rode on.

Eventually—as everybody in the F.V.H. knows—hounds killed their fox by themselves some three miles from Barkford brook. Two riderless horses were in the middle of the pack.

VI.

BLACK care sat behind Guy after he had left Esther at Fonthill Court. He had won a sweet girl under false pretences. All excitement bubbled out of him as he lay full length in a hot bath. He was honest with himself. Never, never would he be a horseman. He had ridden his first and last hunt.

At ease in a chair he thought of a possible future. He would keep four hunters for Esther. Would she accept a man who proposed to hunt henceforward—on wheels ? Yes ; he might square her and an ex-M.F.H. with such gilt-edged promises.

Esther, in her bedroom, was as fully sensible of the issues involved. Guy, as a thruster, had terrified her. And he had established a record with the F.V.H. for himself and her. Henceforward she would be expected to " go " as she had gone this eventful morning. Every fibre in a sensitive body quivered at the prospect.

However, being a Fonthill, she consoled herself with the reflection that hunting men of the keenest type did accept with equanimity wives who gave up hunting. That meant more gees for the male. But, being as honest as Guy, she must tell the truth that night and face the consequences. If Guy winced at her confession, if he raised a disconcerting eyebrow, they would be parted for ever !

During dinner, when all the men were in pink, Esther described the run up to the brook with a corroborative detail which upset Guy, confirming his conviction that none but a Fonthill could have done such justice to such a theme. As Esther finished the entrancing narrative, Sir Gilbert made a comment :—

" Beats me, child, that you had the gumption to go to the left side of the covert when all of us went to the right."

Esther crumbled her bread and said nothing.

" It was more than luck," observed Sir Gilbert, solemnly. " I believe that some people have an instinct for getting a good start. My father had it. You inherit it from him."

When the port was brought in Sir Gilbert proposed the toast of the evening :—

" Fox-hunting ! "

It was drunk with acclamation.

After dinner Guy found himself alone with Esther. And he was well aware that the Fonthill family had accepted him as one of themselves. Still, before he spoke to Sir Gilbert, it was due to Esther to speak candidly to her. To his surprise she spoke first.

" I have something disagreeable to tell you," she began.

" There has been—*another,*" thought Guy. She continued quickly :—

" Father wondered why I took you that side of the covert."

" As he says—an inherited instinct."

" No. I took you there, Guy, because I'm a miserable coward. I thought—I hoped that the fox would break away on the other side. Then we should have been pounded, as they were."

" You—you wanted to be pounded ? "

" I'm horribly afraid of my mare. I don't believe I can ever ride her again. I'd rather not ride at all. I—I don't think hunting the only thing in the world. I'm—I'm fed up with it. When Daddy proposed the toast to-night, I whispered under my breath —' Tennis.' "

" You—lamb ! I whispered under my breath—' Golf.' "

" What can you mean ? "

" What you mean. I was in a blue funk too. I can't ride for nuts. If you had been alongside of me you would have seen Becky playing cup-and-ball with me. I was all over the poor beast, from his ears to his tail. At each fence I shut my eyes."

They embraced tenderly. After the interlude Guy said, nervously :—

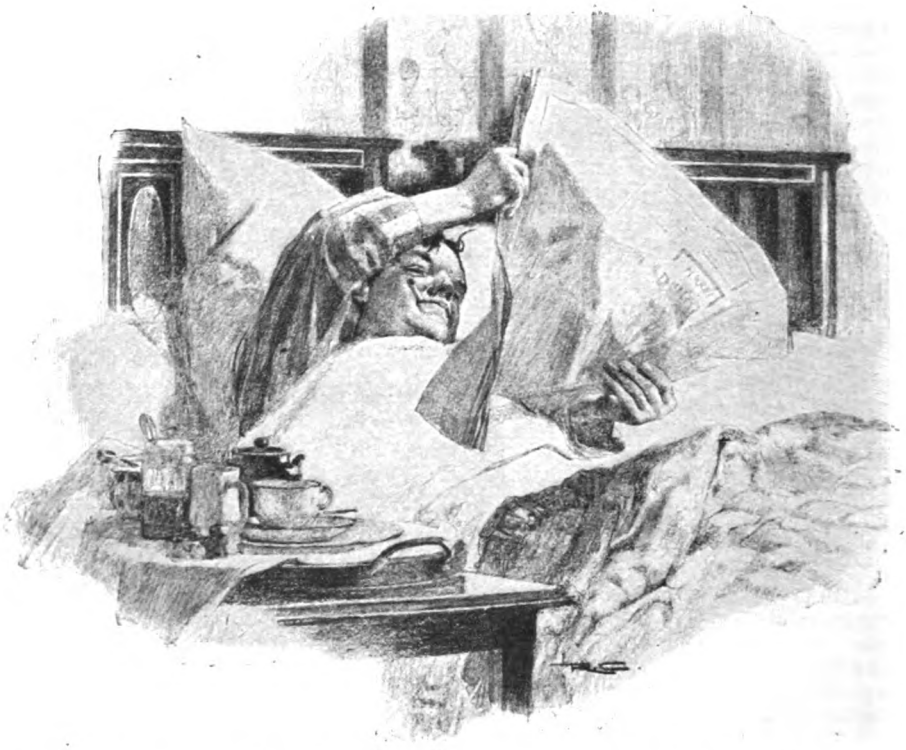
" Shall I tell your father to-night ? "

" We'll tell him together to-morrow."

" I can square him, darling."

" How ? "

" If he gives you to me, I shall give him—Becky."



ONE SUNDAY MORNING

by

STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

THE iron fingers of habit probed his consciousness into the realization that it was seven-thirty, the hour to rise. He sighed as he pushed his way to the surface through the pleasant obscurity of tangled dreams. And then, oh, joy!—his conscious brain registered the abrupt reflection that it was Sunday. Oh, happy thought! Oh, glorious and soporific reflection! He sank back again, like a deep-sea monster plunging into the dark waters of its natural environment. There passed a long untroubled passage of time, in which his subconscious mind dallied with ecstatic emotions. Then slowly and reluctantly he blinked once more into the light of day and knowingness. This re-entry was accompanied by the pleasant sound of running water. His wife was in the bathroom, already getting up. Her activity and the sound of her ablutions added a piquance to the luxury of his own state. Oh, Sunday, glorious and inactive day!

His mind became busy with the anticipations of his own inactivity.

Breakfast in bed! When he won the Calcutta Sweepstake he would always have breakfast in bed. There was something irresistibly luxurious about sitting up snugly

Copyright, 1924, by Stacy Aumonier.

in the warmed bed, eating toast and bacon and drinking hot tea that someone else, pottering about in the cold, had had to prepare. And when one had had breakfast one was a man, fortified for anything, even to the extent of getting up.

His wife came back into the bedroom, wearing—oh, those funny things that women wear underneath deceptive frocks. He had been married for sixteen years, and the vision of his wife in these habiliments did not produce in him any great manifestation of interest. He realized that he wanted his tea, and his interests were more nearly concerned with the estimate of how long it would take her to finish dressing and go downstairs and make it. And after breakfast—oh, that first cigarette and the indolent stimulus of reading the Sunday newspaper from cover to cover. His wife was chatting away about the cook-general, who was ill, and he boomed out a lethargic "yes" or "no" according to the decision which he believed that she expected. Oh, luxurious and delicious indifference!

SHE bustled away at last, and he listened entranced to the distant sound of rattling plates and tea-cups. A pity that Jenny had to get the breakfast herself, but there! she didn't have to go to the City every day in the week, and besides—it was the woman's sphere. His conscience was serene and satisfied, his senses aroused almost to exultation by the sudden and insidious smell of frying bacon.

When she brought the tray he roused himself valiantly to say the gracious thing, for he realized that the situation was a little dangerous. His wife was not in too good a temper over this affair of the fool of a cook. If he was not careful she would want him to do something, chop wood or bring up coals, some angular and disturbing abrasion upon the placidity of his natural rights. However, she left the breakfast tray without any such disquieting threats.

He stared at the tray, when she had gone, as a cat may look at a mouse which she has cornered, realizing that the great charm of the situation lies in the fact that there is no hurry. At last he poured himself out a large cup of tea, and drank it in gulps. He then got busy on the bacon and the toast. He ate up all the bacon carefully and thoughtfully, cleaning up the liquid fat with a piece of bread. He began to feel good. He drank more tea, and ate slice after slice of buttered toast, piled up with marmalade. At last he sank back on the pillow replete. Then he reached out and took his cigarette case out of his coat pocket. He lighted a cigarette and opened the Sunday newspaper. Then, indeed, did he reach the culmination of all his satisfactions. Strange how much more interesting and readable a Sunday newspaper is than a daily paper. A daily paper is all rush and headlines, designed entirely for the strap-hanger. The Sunday paper was conceived in the interest of breakfasters in bed. It is all slow-going and familiar. You know just where to look for everything, and you almost know what will be printed there. He first of all read carefully the results of all the previous day's football. Queer that he should do so, for he had not played football for twenty-five years, and then very indifferently. But he had sneaking affections for certain clubs and he looked eagerly to see how they were faring. Then he read the general news. Everything seemed interesting; even political speeches were not too dull, but divorce and criminal cases were thrilling. He took no interest in literature, drama, or music, but sayings of the week, police-court news, foreign intelligence, even Court chat, absorbed him. He read the advertisements and then the football news again, knocking the ash off his cigarette into the tea-cup. Sometimes his arms would get cold holding the paper, and he would put it down and tuck them under him. He would stare round the room, and glow with proprietorial delight. Then he would pick up the paper and start all over again. His splendid reveries were eventually disturbed by the voice of his wife calling from below:—

"Jim, are you going to get up to-day or to-morrow?"

Dear, oh, dear! Disturbing and alarming creatures, women. No sense of repose, no appreciation of real tranquillity. However, it must be getting late, and the morning constitutional to give one an appetite for lunch must not be disregarded. He devoted another ten minutes to an inert contemplation of the function of rising and dressing, and then rolled out of bed. He went into the bathroom, and lighted the geyser for his weekly bath. When the water was hot enough he drew off some for shaving, and returned to the bedroom for his new packet of safety razor blades. He caught sight of himself in the long mirror which his wife used. The reflection was so familiar that it produced in him no emotion whatever. He felt no misgiving about the puffy modelling of the face, the dishevelled strands of disappearing hair, the taut line made by the cord of his dressing-gown where it met around his middle. It was just himself, getting up. Besides, no man looks his best first thing in the morning.

When he returned to the bathroom he was in gay spirits. During the operation of shaving he made curious volcanic noises meant to represent the sound of singing. Running water always affected him like

that. The only disquieting element in this joyous affair was the fact that steam from the bath kept on clouding the mirror. He kept on rubbing it with a towel, shaving a little bit, then rubbing again, to the accompaniment of many damns and confounds. When that was over he pondered for some moments on the question of whether he should clean his teeth first or have his bath. As the room was beginning to get full of steam, he decided on the latter course. He got in and let himself down slowly, for the water was very hot, and though his legs could stand it, other portions of his anatomy were more sensitive. He let in some cold water and settled down with a plomp. He soaped himself, and rubbed himself, and lay on his back, splashing gently. Glorious and delightful sensation. If he had time he would like to have a hot bath every day, but how could you expect a fellow to when he had to be in the City every day at nine-thirty? He got out of the bath, hot and pink and shiny. He dried himself, and cleaned his teeth. There! all the serious side of getting up was accomplished. During the performance of dressing he smoked another cigarette. He dressed very slowly and deliberately, putting on a clean shirt, vest, socks, and collar. Golly! he felt good. He puffed out his chest, opened the window, and brushed his hair. He was rather pleased with his general appearance of respectability.

Now came the dangerous moment. He had to go downstairs. Would he be able to escape without being ordered to perform some unpleasant task by his wife? He went down, humming soulfully. In the sitting-room the fire was burning brightly, but Jenny was not there. He could hear her bustling about in the kitchen, already preparing the solemn rites affecting the Sunday joint—no insignificant ritual. He wandered about the room, touching things, admiring their arrangement. He picked up two letters which had come by the last post the previous night, and read them again. One was from his wife's sister at Ramsgate, full of details about the illness of her husband. The other was from a gentleman offering to lend him any sum of money from five pounds to ten thousand pounds on note of hand alone, without security. He tried to visualize ten thousand pounds, what he could do with it, the places he could visit, the house he could rent on the top of Hampstead Heath, a few dinners at the Savoy perhaps, a month in Paris (he had never been abroad). Then he tore the letter up and went into the kitchen.

"Er—anything I can do, my dear?"

"No, except to get out of the way."

She was obviously on edge. Women were like that, especially first thing in the morning—curious creatures. He picked his teeth with a match, which happened to be conveniently in a waistcoat pocket. Anyway, he had done his duty. He had faced the music.

"Well, I'll just go for a stroll round," he murmured, ingratiatingly. He had escaped! A pallid sun was trying to penetrate a nebulous bank of clouds. The air was fresh and stimulating. A muffin man came along, ringing his bell. He passed two anæmic women carrying prayer-books. At the corner of the road was a man with an impromptu kiosk of newspapers. He hesitated as to whether he should buy another newspaper. His wife wouldn't approve. She would say it was extravagant. Well, he could read it on a seat on the top of the Heath, and leave it there. But still—he resisted the temptation and walked on. The streets had their definitely Sunday look. You could tell it was Sunday in a glance—milk, prayer-books, newspapers, muffins; wonderful! Dear England! A crowd of hatless young men on bicycles came racing along the Finchley Road, swarms of them, like gnats, and in the middle a woman riding behind a man on a tandem. They were all laughing and shouting with rather common voices—enjoying themselves though, off to the country for the day.

"The woman looks like the queen gnat," he reflected. "They are pursuing her. The race to the swift, the battle to the strong." He was pleased with the luminance of this reflection. A boy asked him for a cigarette picture. He shook his head and passed on. Then he wondered whether—well, he had several in his pocket, but somehow he felt it would look silly to be giving cigarette pictures to a boy in the street. He didn't like that kind of thing. It made him conspicuous. Passers-by might look at him and say: "Look at that fat man giving a boy cigarette pictures." And they might laugh. It was all very curious, foolish perhaps, but there it was.

HE knew he was going to walk up to the top of the Heath and along the Spaniards Road, but he never liked to make up his mind. He walked there by instalments, sometimes almost deciding to turn back, but he invariably got there in the end. Besides, what else could he do? Dinner was not till half-past one. He couldn't go home, and there was nowhere to sit down. Going up the hill he was conscious of the disturbance of his pulmonary organs—heart not too good, either, you know. The day would come when this would be too much for him. He enjoyed it when he got there. Oh, yes,

Nearly every Sunday for twenty years he had walked up to the top of Hampstead Heath.

this was a joyous place — heartening. He liked the noise, and bustle, and sense of space and light. Nearly every Sunday for twenty years he had walked up here. It was where the Cockney came to peep out of London, and regard the great world, the unexplored vista of his possessions. He was a little shy of it. He didn't look at the view much, but he liked to feel it was there. He preferred to watch boys sailing miniature yachts on the round pond, or to listen to a Socialist lecturer being good-humouredly heckled by a crowd. Every Sunday he had pondered an identical problem—why these public lecturers always chose the very noisiest spot on the whole Heath, near the pond, amidst the yelping of dogs, the tooting of motor-horns, the back-firing of motor-bikes, and the din of a Salvation Army band. But there it was! This was England, perhaps the most English thing in all England. There were the young men in plus fours, without hats, old men with their dogs, red-cheeked women riding astride brown mares — cars, bicycles, horses, dogs, even yachts! There were the fat policemen in couples, talking lazily, their mission being apparently to see that the fiery gentleman by the pond was allowed free speech. There were boys with kites, and boys with scooters, boys with nursemaids. Oh, a man's place this. Many more men than women. Did not the predominance signify something vital, something pertinent to the core of English life—the Sunday joint? It was only the women with cooks who were allowed to adorn this gay company. And even then—could a cook be trusted? Wasn't the wife's or mother's true place basting the sirloin or regulating the gas-stove so that the roast shoulder should be done to a turn?

These reflections caused him to focus his attention upon the personal equation. What was to be the Sunday joint to-day?

He was already beginning to feel those first delightful pangs of hunger, the just reward of exercise in fresh air. The Sunday joint? Why, yes, of course, he had heard Jenny say that she had ordered a loin of pork. Pork!—delicious and seductive word. He licked his lips, and visualized the set board. It was not entirely a misfortune that the cook was ill, for Jenny was a much better cook. The pork would be done to a turn, with its beautiful brown encasement of crackling. There would be apple-sauce, Brussels sprouts, and probably lovely brown potatoes. He would carve. It was only right, of course, that the master of the house—the breadwinner—should control this ceremonial. There were little snippy brown bits—and that little bit of kidney underneath—that—well, one didn't give to a servant, for instance.

He passed the orator once more, and overheard this remark :—

" The day is coming when these blood-suckers will be forced to disgorge. They will be made to stew in their own juice. Look at Russia ! "

Nobody appeared to be looking at Russia. With their pipes in the corner of their mouths they were looking kindly at the speaker, or at the boys and their yachts. Dogs were barking furiously, and motor-horns drowned any further declamation till he was out of hearing. The two fat policemen were talking about horse-racing. Oh, wonderful and imperishable country !

He had heard men talk in that strain before—but only in the City or in stuffy tea-shops. They spoke with fear in their hearts. Something was always going to happen. They didn't quite know what, but it was always something awful, and the country was just on the eve of it. But up here, amidst these dogs and bikes and horses, you knew that nothing could ever happen to England. Everybody just went on doing things, making the best of things. The air was sweet and good. There was the Sunday joint in the offing, and the Cup final next Saturday to be discussed.

He looked at his watch and proceeded to walk slowly homewards. It cannot be said that he thought about anything very definite on the way back, but his mind was pleasantly attacked by fragmentary thoughts, half-fledged ambitions to make more money, anticipations of a Masonic dinner the following week, the dim vision of an old romance with a girl in a tobacconist's shop at Barnes. But at the back of his mind there loomed the solid assurance of the one thing that mattered—pork ! He played with the vision, not openly but secretly. After the pork there would be pudding. He didn't care much about pudding, but there was a very good old Gorgonzola to follow, and then a glass of port. After dinner a cigar, and then the Sunday newspaper again until he fell into that delightful doze in front of the fire. Oh, blessed day !

HIS timing was superb. He arrived at the Dog and Dolphin at exactly one o'clock, in accordance with a time-honoured tradition—the gin and bitters to put the edge on one's appetite for dinner. The bar was filled with the usual Sunday morning crowd, some who had risen just in time for the bar to open, other stalwarts like himself who had earned their appetites through walking. He was just ordering a gin and bitters when a voice said :—

" Hullo, old boy, have this one with me."

He turned and beheld Beeswax, a fellow City man. They had known each other for fifteen years, meeting nearly every day, but neither had ever visited the other's home. He said :—

" No, go on, you have it with me."

They went through the usual formula of arguing who would pay for the first drink, both knowing quite well that the other would inevitably have to stand another drink in return. They stood each other two drinks, making four in all. In the meantime they discussed old So-and-so and old Thingummy, trade, dogs, tobacco, and females. Then he looked at his watch again. Just five-and-twenty past—perfect !

" Well, old boy, I must be off or I shall get into trouble with the missus."

He [illegible] quite briskly up the street, feeling [illegible] wasn't such a bad business to a normal man, if he—looked after him[illegible] and on the bright side of things. Pork, eh ?

He knocked his pipe out against the parapet in the front garden, walked up the steps, and let himself in ! He hung up his coat and hat, and was about to enter the sitting-room when he became abruptly sensitive to disaster. It began in the realization that there was no smell of roasting pork, no smell of anything cooking. He felt angry. Fate was going to cheat him in some way or the other. He did not have long to wait. His wife came screaming down the stairs, her face deadly white, her hair awry.

" Jim ! Jim ! " she shouted, " rush to the corner quick. Fetch a policeman ! "

" What ? " he said.

" Fetch a policeman ! "

" What for ? "

" Moyna. She's dead. I went upstairs an hour ago and found her lying fully dressed on the floor. The gas-stove was turned on.

She looked awful, but she wasn't quite dead. I dragged her into our room and fetched a doctor. He did what he could, but she died. She's lying dead on our bed. The doctor's up there now."

"Yes, but——"

"Don't argue. Fetch a policeman. The doctor says we must."

He fumbled his way out into the hall, and put on his hat and coat again. He knew it was no good arguing with his wife when she was like that. Damn! How wretched and disturbing and—inconvenient! He walked slowly up the street. What a disgusting and unpleasant job—fetching a policeman—beastly! He found a ripe specimen at the corner, staring at nothing. He explained the situation apologetically to the officer. The latter turned the matter over in his mind and made a noise that sounded like "Huh-huh."

Then the two strolled back to the house at the law's pace, and talked about the weather. He found his wife in the sitting-room, sobbing and carrying on, and the doctor was there too, and another woman from next door.

"Jim! Jim!" she shouted, "rush to the corner quick. Fetch a policeman!"

"I believe these women rather enjoy this kind of thing," he reflected, the fires of hunger and anger burning within him. They all went upstairs and left him to ruminate. What a confounded and disgusting nuisance! Anyway, what did Jenny want to carry on like that for about a servant? Who was she? She hadn't been there long—about two weeks. She was an Irish girl, not bad-looking in that dark way. He seemed to remember that Jenny said she was married or something. Some man had been cruel to her, cruel and callous, she had said. She used to cry. Confound it! Why was it so difficult to get a good servant? But there it was. Jenny would carry on and be hysterical all the afternoon. There would be no dinner. Perhaps a snack of cheese or something on the quiet. Women were absurd, impossible. You couldn't cope with them. They had no reasoning power, no logic, no sense of fatality, no repose. It was enough to make one boil. . . . Pork, too!

THE PEARL OF TAHEU

BY

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. SMITHSON BROADHEAD

I.

THE PEARL BUYERS.

THE *Arafura* had dropped three or four pearl buyers, half-a-dozen Chinks, a Yankee showman, and the component parts of a cable switchback at Malii Lagoon. She was now making a long board for Taheu, where she would dump Wisemann and Purvis, a Frenchman from the Rue de la Paix in Paris, a Spaniard, four Germans, and a Jew; all pearl buyers, with the exception of Purvis and Wisemann.

It was the opening of the pearling season in the Paumotus, and looking down from impossible heights and with supernatural vision you would have seen the whole of that vast archipelago lying beneath you from Manihi almost to Gambier; thousands of atolls, big and small, each a pond ringed with coral, and towards the islands to be opened this season the ships of the pearl buyers coming to trade with the natives.

It was after breakfast, and Purvis and Wisemann, seated aft a bit away from the others, were engaged in making up their accounts and settling differences. Purvis, young, yellow-haired, furtive-looking, with cigarette-stained fingers; Wisemann, twenty years older, heavy, baggy under the eyes, his waistcoat crossed by an oroide gold watch-chain.

They were partners. They had only met three weeks ago at Papeete, where Purvis, a camera-man who had lost his job at Hollywood, had landed with a projecting camera, for which the police of Los Angeles had given up the hunt, and with twenty-five hundred feet or so of junk film, over the loss of which Moses Boreheim, the junk film dealer, was still lamenting in far-away California. Bits of old pictures: "Mutt and Jeff," "The Bunco-Steerer's Bride," "A Woman of the Great Wild West," "Salome of the Plains"—junk, but good enough for the islands, according to Wisemann.

The unwritten deed of partnership which bound these two gentlemen together was of great simplicity and had few provisions. Wisemann was supplying the canvas for the rag-and-stick theatre and paying the fares to Taheu; Purvis was supplying the pictures, the projector, and the expert knowledge; Wisemann would keep the door and take the money in the form of shell or coco-nuts; Purvis would grind out the pictures till what time he could instruct some native boy in the business.

Wisemann also brought to the firm local knowledge. This was not his first pearling season. He had been down to Taheu the year before last as owner and manager of a stick-jaw stall, selling caramels that beat tar for glutinosity, fuzzy-wuzzies, pop-corn, chewing gum, liquorice ropes, and rum-conserved tobacco, and working a soda fountain that had literally "gone bust," and nearly broke him; but for a pearl wangled out of a young Kanaka whose "sweet tooth was bigger'n his wisdom tooth," he'd have lost money on that season's trade.

"Well," said Purvis, as he closed up his ratty old notebook and lit another cigarette, "if there ain't another movie show movin' along to this blessed old pie-dish of an atoll of yours, we oughta make out; six shells

Copyright, 1924, by H. de Vere Stacpoole.

a nob or four coco-nuts; fifty on an average to a house and six houses a day; no rent or services, only for a chap to work the buzzer when I've learned him. Yes, it oughta pay. The only thing that's rubbin' me under the saddle is the pictures. I've never put the hood on you over the pictures. I was runnin' all the way from Santa Barbara to Papeete beach and had no time to take stock of them. When I did I'd 'a' dumped them in the bay and turned missionary only I fell in with you. What there is of them ain't bad; it's what there isn't of them gets me. Five minutes of cowboy stuff that's continued with a girl in a Humpmobile bein' chased by a gunman in a roarin' Royce that turns into three hundred foot of Charlie Chaplin with a star in the middle and goes on to Mutt puttin' Jeff in a bar'l of molasses, and not enough of that even, don't make for continooity."

"Don't you bother about that," said Wisemann. "They're movies, ain't they? They're pictures, ain't they? Well, what more do you want? You keep the Kanakas starin' whilst I sample their pockets, and don't be botherin' your head about high art and continooity. Pearls is our game. Pearls, and we have to fight chaps like that." He pointed to Cohen, the Jew, who had been popping corks in the cabin and who was now coming on deck wiping his mouth with a red silk handkerchief.

"That's the sort that's against us, and that's the sort that gets all the pickin's."

"What's their game?" asked Purvis. "And how do they play it?"

"Well, it's this way," said the other. "A chap like Cohen comes along to an atoll—Taheu for choice, and he goes round and makes his observations and picks out a couple of the best native divers; he doesn't lend them money, for money's not much use in a place like Taheu, but he sells them stuff on credit, dud watches and ten-cent gramophones and silk shirts and North Pole diamonds, and any d——d thing you can put a name to, bar, maybe, skates. He comes back season after season and gets his diving chaps so tied up in debt that they're his from their souls to their skins, which he doesn't want, but he wants their pearls, and he gets them."

"There you are," said Purvis, "that's your tradesman. As I was tellin' you last night, Billy Wisemann, them tradin' chaps has the world skimmed so there's no cream for no one, and least of all for the likes of you and me, and it's a full house to a busted flush that we won't do no good at Taheu with chaps like that round. My idea is to lay low, work the movies for a blind, keep our eyes skinned for chaps like Cohen, and then go for one of them and take his takin's off him."

"I don't want any penitentiary business in mine, thanks," said Wisemann.

Purvis grinned. He was about to reply when the voice of the look-out came, thin as a seagull's cry:—

"Land!"

II.

JEAN FRANÇOIS CALABASSE.

TAHEU showed in the blazing morning; the faintest trace of palm-tops on the sea line, now visible from the deck, now washed out by the swell.

Two hours later, with the first of the flood and the wind almost dead astern, the *Arafura* entered the great lagoon, vast and calm as an inland sea, with the northern beach to starboard running away to lose itself in the blue distance; a beach white as salt, hedged by the groves of jack-fruit and cocoa palms through which showed glimpses of the outer sea. A brig and a schooner lay off the main village, whose thatched roofs marked themselves amidst the trees, and away, like midges on the water of the lagoon, the pearling canoes showed where the divers were at work on the great beds stretching to the west.

Purvis, as he trained a pair of cheap opera-glasses on the crowded beach, kept talking over his shoulder to Billy Wisemann.

"There ain't no picture-house that I can see," said Purvis, "but it's a pea-nut gallery public by the sample; there's more children than women, and women than men. Here, take the glasses whiles I look after the dunnage."

He handed over the glasses as the anchor chain of the *Arafura* raised echoes from the groves, then in the first boat away he was on shore with Wisemann.

Purvis and his companion pushed through the crowd, past the booths whose paraffin flare lamps were only waiting to insult the stars, right to the western end of the village where the great trees grew, palms and bread-fruit strangely noble in contrast with the crew on the beach and the frowsty old schooners in the anchorage.

Both men were carrying bags; the rest of their stuff would be landed before dark, and they were looking now for a pitch. The picture-house once erected would serve them for an hotel.

"And here's the place," said Purvis, as they came to a bay in the groves; "couldn't be better if it was cut out on purpose. Let's measure him."

They dumped their bags and, Purvis producing a tape measure, they set to work, Purvis kneeling, Wisemann walking with the free end of the tape.

So engaged, they did not notice the approach of an old man who had left a little palmetto-thatched house on the west of the clearing, attracted by their voices.

"Fifty-one foot," cried Purvis. "'Nuff and to spare; now, then, get round for the side measurements. Hullo!" He turned his head to where the old man stood right behind him. "Hullo, pop, wherever in the hulnation have you blown in from?"

"'Scuse me, sar," said the new-comer, who was on sight a white man, and a Frenchman at that, "my name is Jean François Calabasse—what for you measuring my property?"

"Your property?" said Purvis.

"Yes, sar, all this including my abode; what for you measure it?"

Purvis looked at Jean François Calabasse, a white man who had "gone native" many years ago; looked at his nose, coloured by drinking, observed his wandering eye and his clothes, clean and patched by some native woman. He would have flung Jean François Calabasse into the lagoon without compunction or pity, only that Jean's manner and statement carried conviction. There was no use stirring up trouble. Purvis became at once all oil. He explained, but Jean shook his head. Purvis laughed. He went to his bag and produced a bottle. Jean explained that he did not want any shows set up so near his house; then he took a drink. Then he went to his house for three tin cups and a drinking nut, and they all had drinks, and in an hour Jean had leased the site for a permanent free seat and two dollars a week paid in advance.

"But you must tell nothing to my darter about the money," said Jean, as he helped to finish the flask of Sneidmann's kill-you-straight thirty above proof Volendam, warranted over one year old.

Then he collected the tin cups and departed hiccuping, leaving the surveyors to their work.

III.

THE PEARLING FLEET.

AT noon, when the *Arafura* came bowling into the lagoon, the pearling fleet had ceased work for a spell, the men and their women-folk smoking cigarettes, talking, laughing and shouting remarks from canoe to canoe. Then at the sight of the schooner the fleet fell dumb, cigarettes and bananas were forgotten, and every eye watched critically as she rounded-to with sails spilling the wind and the helm hard a-starboard.

When the rumble-tumble of the anchor chain came across the water, tongues broke out and Jean Calabasse's "darter," Amama, leaning by her pearling mate Damea, whistled drearily between her teeth.

Amama could talk like that, and she was saying to herself and to Damea, who knew quite well what was passing in her mind: "There's the *Arafura* in; she hasn't piled herself on any reef and the storm of last week hasn't hurt her; Cohen is on board and he will want all that pile of shell we have collected since the season opened a fortnight ago, and those two little pearls." That was the thought in Amama's mind, as in the mind of Damea. Amama was lovely with the beauty of the half-caste, lovely and dark, still almost a child; she had fished for two seasons now with Damea, the half-caste Spaniard, young as herself, whose father, Juan Lopez, had died of the same disease that was killing Jean François Calabasse. She had known Damea since earliest childhood, they had grown up together, played together, become inseparable; a community of two with Damea the leader and Amama the follower; like brother and sister, yet never quarrelling, though the temper of Damea was hot as flame and sharp as a sword.

Love had never come near them, yet if Death had stricken one he would most surely have destroyed the other, so close together were they, so bound together in a friendship mysterious as the source of life.

This curious relationship might be expressed vaguely in the statement—they were still children.

When Damea's father had died, Damea had inherited the outrigger canoe and the right to fish, the only dowry of his mother, also dead. Amama had joined him as fishing partner, and during the last two seasons had kept guard whilst he dived, helped to manage the canoe, and clean and stack the shell. Three large pearls they had taken in those seasons, to say nothing of seeds and baroques and shell. They had been extraordinarily lucky, and their take had been a small fortune to Cohen, for Cohen had spotted Damea from the first as a good diver and an innocent, and Cohen had acted according to his lights.

Pearls and shell, all had gone into the possession of Cohen in exchange for boxes of candy and cigars, bead necklaces for Amama, silk shirts—with the result that Damea was in debt—heavily in debt according to Cohen.

No wonder that the coming of the *Arafura* made Amama whistle dismally between her teeth. Amama had more business sense than Damea—the French have always beaten the Spaniards in practical affairs—it did not want friends and neighbours to tell her that Damea was being

ne," and she had managed during last eason to infect Damea with the truth, there was little use in that in front of act that Cohen's bill for goods supplied, arded by a B.P. boat before the opening is season, showed Damea on the wrong of the fence to the tune of three hundred rs. Besides feeling that they had been ne," Damea and Amama were possessed the child's natural instinct to evade ment for pleasures enjoyed but forgotten. Co-an was to come in this ship," said nea, speaking in the dialect of Taheu. e will be waiting for us when we get k."

Co-an," said Amama. "A, he, Co-an." drew in her breath and with sparkling s was about to give vent to her feelings n a cry struck her dumb.

Tarapa, Tarapa—the clam, the clam!" ough the air, straight as a bird from oe to canoe, the axe, its head bound up coco-nut sennit, went flying till it reached anoe where a woman was standing up ving her arms. She seized it, unwound bindings from its head, and dived with nto the water.

Her mate, the first man down after the t interval, had been trapped by a great m.

The great clam, a bivalve as big as a all bath, lies where the bottom is sludgy; ed almost vertically, its two shells apart, ot or hand introduced into this terrible outh causes it to close with the snap of a and the diver is trapped. It is a rare cident at Taheu, but so feared that an e or heavy knife is generally carried—d, more generally, forgotten.

Amama, her hand grasping the forward trigger pole, and Damea with his hand her shoulder, watched till the water broke d the woman reappeared, dragging her ate on board their rocking canoe. His ft hand was gone, and she was grasping m by the forearm to stop the bleeding. ey watched her binding the arm, casting ose the anchor rope, and paddling for ore.

Amama sighed. That was one of the ings she had always dreaded might ppen to Damea; the thought of it brought ohen suddenly into her mind—Cohen, who n no risks; Cohen, who took all and gave ttle; Cohen, who would be waiting for em on the beach when they returned. ut she said nothing, and Damea, having nished a cigarette, resumed his diving.

TWO hours later, when Damea had knocked off for the day, they set to work to open the catch.

No rotting out on the beach was allowed t Taheu; the oysters had to be opened and searched before landing, and only the shells were allowed to be brought ashore, huge shells as big, almost, as soup plates, and of the white Tahiti type. Mother-of-pearl shells are found of all weights from a few ounces up to fifteen pounds a pair, and there are three varieties: the white, the golden-edged, and the black-edged. The white is the most valuable, and the price till the last year or so was about the same as it was forty years ago—from sixty pounds to two hundred pounds a ton. This year in which I am writing for some reason or other the price has slumped, so that the storehouses at Tahiti are over-full.

Amama, seated opposite to Damea, seized the great oysters one by one after he had scraped the coral growths and parasites from the shells, placed each, hinge downwards, on the planking, and with a knife cunningly inserted cut the hinge muscle. The shells instantly sprang open, and, cutting the oyster free, her delicate fingers kneaded it in search of a possible pearl.

There was no luck to-day, but the fact did not worry them; they knew from experience that pearling is the hardest of hard work with a gamble attached to it, that the shell alone can be counted on, and that a diver may open five thousand oysters without finding a pearl of any value.

Amama had opened the last and smallest of the oysters and was holding the flesh in her hand, kneading it with her fingers, when a little choking cry made Damea turn from the anchor rope, which he was just about to pull in.

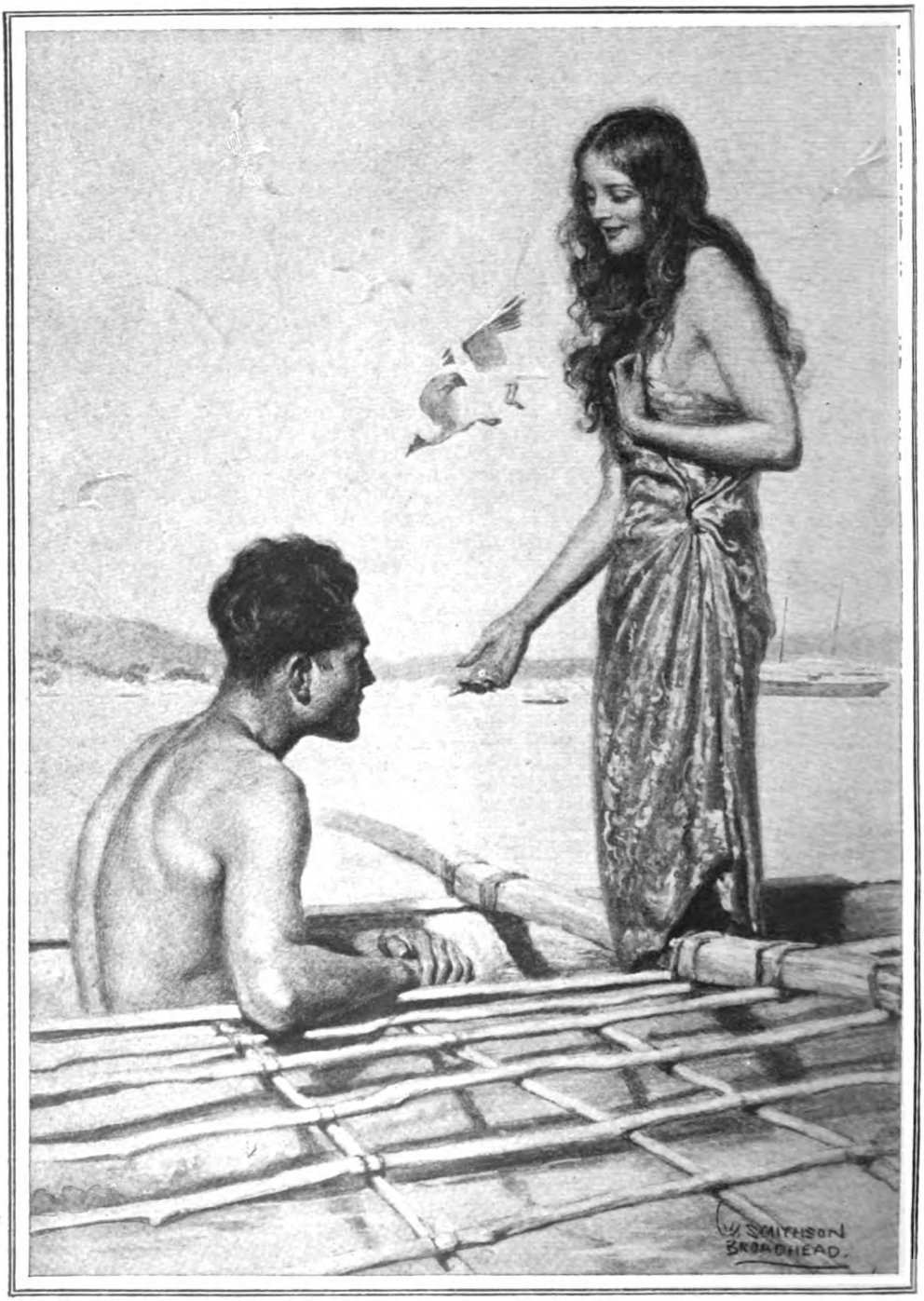
"Oh, feel!" cried Amama.

Damea, leaning forward and taking the oyster between his fingers, felt what seemed to be a pebble buried in the flesh; then, without breathing, he watched whilst the girl, gently dividing the flesh, squeezed up into the light of day what looked like a glistening white bubble, a pearl of maybe fifty grains, perfectly round and perfect in colour.

Amama held it in the palm of her hand and laughed; her partner, squatting, his elbow on the outrigger grating, gazed without a word.

Their momentary joy was checked by a thought—Cohen.

Then they began to talk. They did not wish to swindle Cohen; they reckoned that, with what they had taken since the beginning of the season and what they would take before the end, they would not only satisfy his claims but have enough over to buy the things their souls craved for, and which included a concertina. But well they knew that if Cohen got wind of this great take he would have it from them by the subtle magic that was his, he would "talk it out



Amama held the pearl in the palm of her hand and laughed; her partner gazed without a word.

of them," to use Amama's phrase, and leave them at last not only without the pearl but somehow in debt.

So they agreed to hide it.

"I will put it in a place ashore," said Damea as he tucked it into the loin cloth which was his only garment; "we will hide it at the root of the big tree by your father's door, the tree that has no fellow in all Taheu. I will place it in the little round yellow box that Co-an gave me and we will bury it; and now help me with the anchor."

They hauled the anchor up and took to the paddles; other canoes had got in when they reached the shore and the beach was beginning to swarm, the Chinese Tan Lan men (owners of a species of coco-nut shy, where the prizes were Lucky Strike cigarettes) were shouting the attractions of their show against the conch of the man who ran the marionettes and the call of the woman who sold fried bananas, and there amidst the others sure enough was Cohen in his alpaca coat and old panama, the eternal cigar-butt in the side of his mouth, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and the big diamond on the ring finger of his hairy left hand.

He gave good day to Damea and the pair talked for a while; then Damea, helped by the girl, carted the shell they had taken that day to the store by Damea's house.

When that was done she turned to go home with a whispered word from the other.

"When the moon is up," whispered Damea.

IV.

WHEN THE MOON WAS UP.

As she drew towards the house she noticed Purvis and Wisemann at work in the little clearing; they had got part of the canvas walls up, but the show would not be fit for opening till the following night.

She stood looking at the two men, then she spoke to them, asking what they were doing there, and Purvis, glancing over his shoulder at her, laughed.

"What's she clackin' about?" asked he of Wisemann.

"Wants to know what we're doin' on her father's ground," replied the other.

"Tell her to go hang," said Purvis.

Amama did not wait for the message to be translated. Purvis frightened her, though she only saw him side face with his eye cast back at her and his upper lip raised, showing his teeth, long and yellow. There was nothing terrifying about Purvis to the ordinary sight, but he frightened the girl almost as much as though horns were growing from his head.

She went on, and reaching the house she paused at the doorway.

Jean Calabasse was in the house and he was snoring. She could smell the gin.

Amama sat down by the great tree, a species of redwood, that grew to the eastward of the doorway. She folded her hands in her lap and let her eyes rest on the lagoon, across which in the sunset light the last of the pearling fleet were coming home.

She was the child of Jean Calabasse, but truly speaking and in a psychological sense Jean Calabasse was her child. She mended for him and cooked for him and made him keep tidy, she kept his money when he had any, and stopped him, when she could, from doing foolish things; she was also one of the million women who, all over the world and every day, are fighting the battle against drink.

He had got gin to-night, and she knew at once and instinctively that he had got it from the two strangers who were at work in the little clearing to the east. If there was one thing over which this childish old man was touchy, it was his right to the tiny bit of land, including the bay in the trees. The strangers had paid him without any doubt and he had spent the money in gin, just as a child would spend it on sweets.

Amama knew this, and she knew that she was helpless. Never in her life had she put her father to shame by taxing him with any of his hundred little peccadilloes; her influence had always been by suggestion, never by reproof or accusation, and to make him own up to a fault was quite beyond her. She sat brooding without supper and without appetite, whilst the sun vanished and the great golden stars blazed out above the lagoon. From where she sat she could see by turning her head the glow of the lit beach where the village was holding revel, and the lights of the shipping casting amber dribbles on the silvery water, whilst the warm wind pattering the leaves overhead brought voices, laughter, and far snatches of song all mixed with the eternal murmur of the outer beach, the rumour of the surf making snow beneath the stars.

The moon rose and the sounds of the night began to change; sailors' voices, shouting, came from the boat landing-places, the creak of oars, the calls of women; then little by little, as the moon rose higher in the sky, silence began to take command, and presently on the hard sand by the tree edges there came a step.

It was Damea.

Amama rose up to meet him.

He had brought a big, broad-bladed knife for the digging, and the pearl in a round yellow cigarette tin that Cohen had once given him. He opened the tin and showed her the pearl carefully tucked up in a nest of wool such as the pearl buyers use for

packing; then he rolled the pearl into the palm of his hand and they gloated over it like children. It looked more lovely under the wonderful moon of Taheu even than by day. It seemed to float in the dark palm of Damea, a little ball of cloud touched with moon-bow iridescence.

Replacing it in its box, Damea got down on his knees and began to dig with the knife in the sand at the root of the great tree. The sand only extended for a few inches in depth; then came the red earth, moist and easily removed, then a root branch met the point of the knife; but the depth was sufficient, and placing the little box in the hole Damea covered it, smoothing the sand over all and making a nick in the tough bark of the tree immediately above the little grave.

As Amama watched him she might have seen, had she turned her head, a figure just come out from the house and almost touching her black moon shadow on the sand.

It was Jean François Calabasse, whom the gin had deserted in favour of restlessness.

For a full half-minute Jean stood, his hand on a tree bole and his eyes fixed on the doings of Damea.

Then, turning, he went back into the house to sleep some more—or to dream.

V.

THE CRIME OF JEAN FRANÇOIS CALABASSE.

FOR one week and three days the great Purvis-Wisemann Picture House was crammed from sunset till midnight, and seemed likely to be filled all the season. On the eleventh night, however, signs of a slump began to show themselves, and it seemed that the mysterious play-disease which attacks the best and the worst of dramatic ventures had laid its finger, somehow, on the Purvis-Wisemann production.

What disturbed the producers was not so much the slight falling-off in the crowd as the slight falling-off in the enthusiasm of the audience, and in the volume of yells and shouts that attended the adventures of the girl in the Humpmobile pursued by the gunman in the roaring Royce, the antics of Charlie Chaplin, and the stuffing of Jeff into a barrel of molasses.

Seedman, the dealer who every night bought their takings in shell and nuts, paying in dollars, had developed quite an enthusiasm over the business and talked of coming in as partner, but the box-office receipts on the eleventh and twelfth nights rather damped his enthusiasm.

On the night of the fourteenth, when Jean François Calabasse turned up to demand his rent in advance, Purvis told him frankly to go to Medicine Hat and pick bilberries, and, Wisemann having translated

As Amama watched him she might have seen, had she turned her head, a figure just come out from the house, his eyes fixed on the doings of Damea.

these directions, Jean François departed, not a wiser but a sadder man.

He could not invoke the law; had he done so Amama would have known that he had been receiving money and secreting the fact from her; he could not even complain to friends lest the affair should come to her ears. A drop of drink did not matter, but in holding back the money and hiding up the transaction with Purvis and Wisemann he had committed a mean act; if Amama knew he would be put to shame before her,

a shame all the more burning because she would never upbraid him, a shame all the more blistering because he had lied to her, telling her he had given the new-comers leave to put up their show because they were good fellows for whom he had taken a liking.

So without a drink and with the prospect of an exceedingly dry time before him, Jean François returned to his house and lay down on his sleeping mat to chew the cud of bitterness, helped out by a plug of Navy tobacco.

This house of Jean's had only two rooms, one for himself and one for the girl (they did their cooking in the open); the partition between the two rooms was of canes woven together and covered with matting, and as he lay chewing and thinking, his eyes on the glimpse of moon-burnished water visible through the doorway, he could hear, mixed with the stir of the wind in the palm fronds and the murmur of the surf on the outer beach, a sound, faint, living, and rhythmical, the breathing of Amama in her sleep.

Well, this was the end of the brilliant dream. He had reckoned on two dollars a week sure pocket-money till the finish of the season, money all the sweeter because it was received furtively and spent in secret, none the less sweet because in his heart he despised himself for deceiving his daughter.

Then as he lay, his jaws working and his eyes on the glittering strip of lagoon water, an idea, born of no train of thought, pushed itself up from his subconscious mind, and came to light like the pearl which Amama had squeezed out of the body of the oyster.

"Why not?"

When a man asks himself that fateful question everything is over but the doing.

"Why not?" thought Jean to himself. "Why not? But no, that would never do. Damea is a good lad and he has been kind to us, and, moreover, some day I hope to see him married to Amama. It is her treasure, and without any doubt he is keeping it until such time as he gets married. Eh, but will he ever marry her? Without doubt he will! Besides, I could not dispose of it—yet, why not? There is a buyer for everything at a price. No, no, put the thing away from you, Jean François Calabasse, it is an unworthy thought—and yet!"

He turned on his left side and closed his eyes; lying like this one might have fancied him fast asleep.

The surf on the reef sang and the wind stirred the foliage with the rainy patter of palm fronds. Jean Calabasse seemed dreaming, lost in oblivion, dead to surrounding things; then, suddenly propping himself on his elbow, he turned his body and began to crawl across the matting to the doorway.

Outside he stood erect.

There was no one to watch or see, no one but God and the moon and the stars and the palm trees, and the great redwood, towering and tangling the constellations in its branches. Amama was still asleep, wearied by her day's work, and the village had long fallen to rest.

He came to the little ledge by the doorway, where the knife lay which they used for a hundred purposes, from cleaning fish to cutting canes; then, coming to the great tree, he knelt down where Damea had knelt and began to unearth the treasure. It was not the first time he had done this business; curiosity had driven him to the work on the very night after the thing had been buried, and he had been hugging the secret of it ever since, hugging it innocently with not a dream or a thought of defrauding Damea—till ten minutes ago. Having closed the hole and smoothed the sand, Jean François rose, and with the little box in his hand came back to the house, crawled into his room, and lay down.

He listened. Through the murmur of the surf and the wind in the trees he heard the breathing of the gentle and innocent Amama in her sleep.

VI.

THE AMBER NECKLACE.

FOR days after that Jean François was a man who took little interest in his food or in the life around him. Amama, one day fancying that he was ill, offered to forego the fishing and stay with him during the day so as to cook his midday meal, but he repulsed her. If she was so ready to do that all of a sudden, why had she not thought of it before? She who was always running wild about the place with that good-for-nothing Damea; he wanted no one to stay with him, he could cook his own food, he desired no food, he was old and not long for this world, and all he really wanted was to be let alone.

Amama listened to him, terrified. Never had he spoken to her like this before, never before had he looked at her like that out of the side of his eyes as if in dislike.

A little later, when she was out on the lagoon with him, Damea might have noticed that something was wrong with the girl, but his mind was otherwise engaged. To Damea, as to a child, the moment was everything and the thing on hand. He had assisted that morning at the partial dismemberment of a tiger shark and his mind was full of the business. The shark, rendered unable to bite, see, or steer, was parading the lagoon—a moving horror and a warning to its fellows, and the sight of it as it appeared

at intervals left Amama quite unmoved by pity, for the very good reason that she had once seen the upper half of a diver who had been dealt with by a tiger shark.

She knelt by the forward outrigger pole, receiving the oysters as Damea brought them up, and all the while brooding on the subject of her father, the depression that had been on him for days, and his changed manner towards her.

They put back an hour before sundown, and as they drew in towards the beach they noticed that something of an unusual nature was going forward; women were laughing and children shouting and jostling as they followed a figure that was strutting about, the figure of a man waving a canoe paddle above his head.

It was Jean François Calabasse—drunk.

Drunk, and calling on his ancestors to follow him and fight for the true faith against the heathen occupants of Taheu.

The sight of Amama made him drop the paddle and forget his ancestors and allow himself to be led quietly enough to the house and his sleeping mat, where they covered him with a blanket and left him to his dreams.

Next day, quite unashamed and reinflated with alcohol obtained from some mysterious source, he called Amama to him and presented her with an imitation amber necklace worth at least two dollars.

"It has been given to me," said Jean, with a hiccup; "it is yours, you have the right to wear such things, for are you not the daughter of Jean François Calabasse? I have good friends. A man of my birth is never without friends if he knows where to look for them. Kneel down."

She knelt, and he put the thing round her neck.

"Never forget," said Jean, "that you are a daughter of France; let this gift ever remind you that you are a daughter of France and also of an honest man." Then he began to cry, and Amama, with the amber beads round her neck, left the house, deeply disturbed in her mind.

Outside she saw Damea approaching, come to fetch her for the fishing, and instinctively she whipped the things off and held them in her hand.

"What have you there?" asked Damea.

"Nothing," said Amama, "only these." She opened her hand and showed the beads. "Father gave them to me, but I do not want to wear them now." She ran back into the house and hid them in her room, then they started for the fishing, Damea asking no questions as his mind was full of another matter, a fish-trap which he was going to try next night in the great pools of the outer beach.

VII.

THE SHARK KNIFE.

NOW at the back of the Calabasse house there was a place where rubbish was thrown by Jean, fish bones and odds and ends of food to be disposed of by the robber crabs, old bottles, and empty cans.

Next morning, passing this place, the girl caught sight of a tin box half exposed where either crabs or children had been poking deep into the pile. She picked it up. It was the box in which Damea had hidden the pearl.

She was sure, for some of the cotton-wool packing was still in it. She was certain, because of a dent in the side which she had noticed on the night of the burial.

She ran, box in hand, to the great tree, and, kneeling down, examined the sand at the root just below the little nick in the bark. The sand seemed undisturbed.

It was still early morning, Damea would not be ready to start for the pearling grounds for half an hour or so, and Jean had gone off to the village. There was no one to see her, and running to the house she fetched the big knife from the shelf outside and returned to the tree.

It was a case knife, and as she drew it from its sheath she noticed just where the blade met the haft a trace of red earth. Then she knew that Jean François Calabasse was a thief, and where the money had come from that he had paid for his recent drinking bouts, the necklace he had given her, and his other extravagances. The unbelievable stood before her and said, "I am the truth." Truth stood before her and said, "I am the unbelievable." With a little cry that was half a sob she began to dig, casting the sand aside and attacking the earth beneath in search, not of a pearl but the honour of her father.

It was not there. The knife met the tree root, explored in every direction; nothing

Slowly and like a person working in a dream she began to fill in the hole, she smoothed the sand over all carefully with her palms; the tears were running down her face and they fell on the little grave where her love for Jean and her belief in him lay buried for ever.

The weaknesses that had made him somehow lovable, all had vanished as though they had never been—nothing remained but a thief, hard and heartless. She rose and came into the house, and, having replaced the knife on the shelf, hid the tin in her room beneath some matting. Then she stood, her hands arranging her hair just as though nothing at all had occurred, yet of what she was doing she had not the slightest

idea; then she lay down with her head on the matting that hid the accursed tin.

A step sounded outside; it was Damea come to fetch her to the fishing, but she said she was ill, that her head ached, and she wanted to be left alone. He went off to fetch Oti, the son of old Timu, who sometimes helped him, and Amama heard him go and then lay listening to the wind in the trees.

She could think now clearly, and almost without pain, as though the venom of the world had numbed her sensitiveness whilst leaving her brain free to work. Two things she had to do—protect the name of her father and make good the loss to Damea. Jean had sold the pearl; it must be recovered somehow and without the world knowing that he had stolen it.

Somebody passed the front of the house. It was Jean returned from the village; he had brought back a fowl plucked and ready for cooking, and when the girl came out she found him kneeling by the hole in the ground which he used for an oven, the fowl beside him. When he saw her, he called to her to go and fetch him some leaves to wrap the bird in, asking at the same time how it came about that she was not with Damea at the fishing.

She did not answer, but came straight up and knelt before him by the fire hole.

"Father," said Amama, "a little time ago when I was with Damea in his canoe he found a pearl, a great pearl, larger and more beautiful than any I have seen taken from the water."

"Oh," said Jean, "he found a pearl!" Without raising his eyes to her, he took the fowl in his hands and held it as if weighing it.

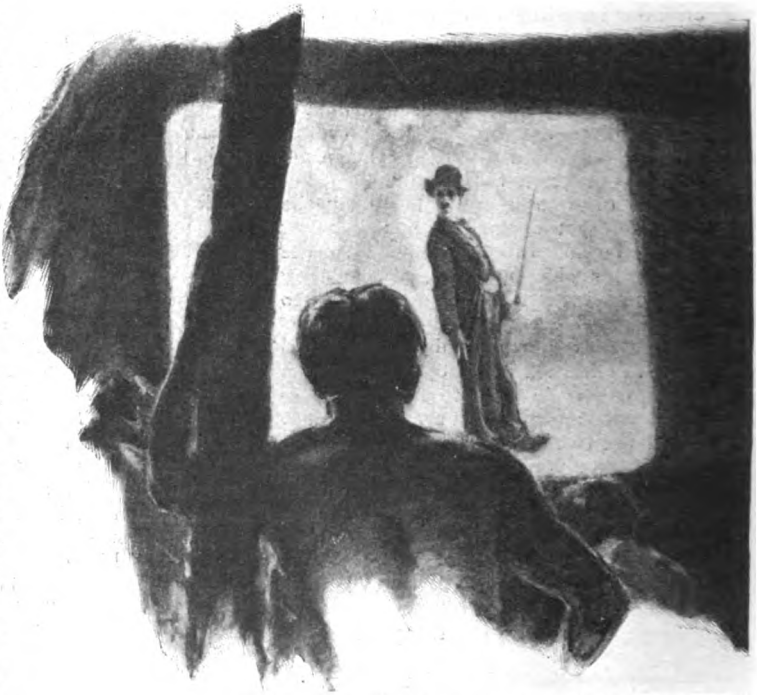
"He hid it beneath the great tree," she went on, "and now it is gone, and I know who has taken it."

The old man said nothing, confessing everything by his silence; he picked at the skin of the bird and turned it over in his hands.

Jean François, a nobleman in his ideas when drunk, was without the pride of a gentleman when sober.

He was sure in his mind that Amama had seen him taking the thing or she would never have spoken like that.

"One night," said Jean, "coming to my door I saw that young man on his knees burying something on my property. You, too, were there. You were hiding this thing from Jean François Calabasse, who dug and found it. Has he no right to dig on his own property, and is not what he finds there his own? Eh?"



The picture-house was crammed from sunset till seemed likely to be filled all the

"Father," said Amama, "the pearl was Damea's, and if I do not find it and give it back to him I will tie a piece of coral to my waist and give myself to the lagoon as Taru did, she who was betrayed by Omara."

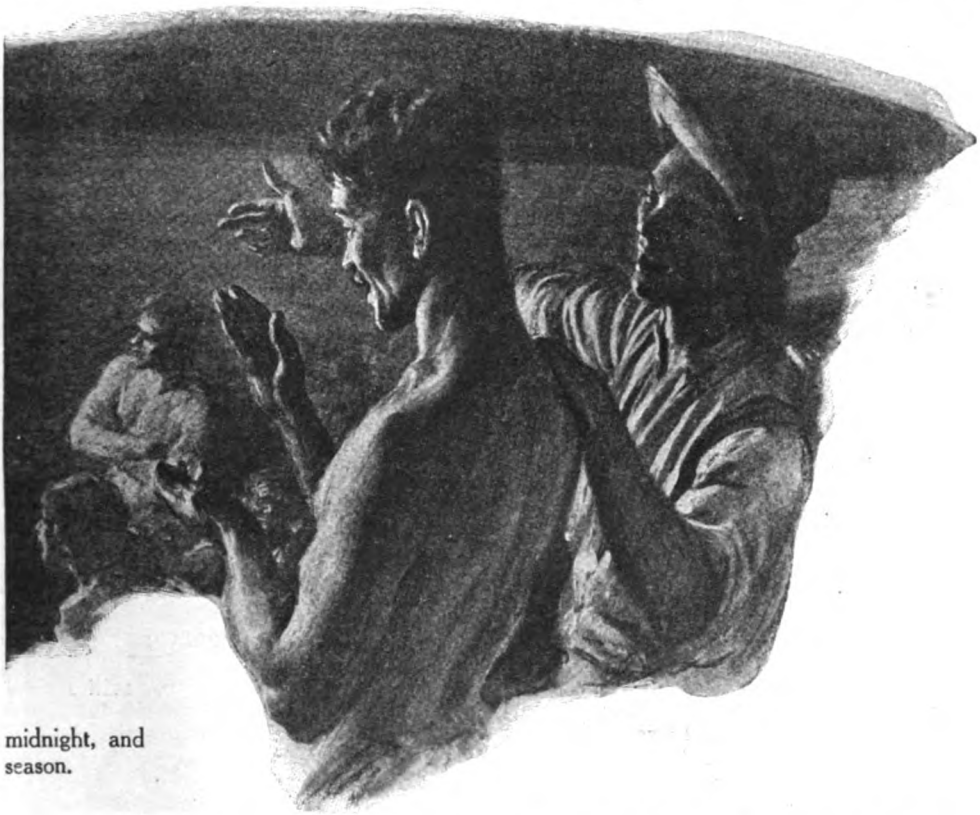
Jean dropped the fowl and began to swear. He had braved out the business; his words, seemingly extemporized, were really the voicing of a long train of conscious and subconscious conversations and suggestions.

"I have taken the pearl, it is true, but

what of it ? Who is Damea, anyhow, the bastard of a Spaniard, of a man, moreover, who had outrun the law ? Then, where did I take it from ? My own property. It was mine, seeing it was buried on my ground. May a man not dig on his own ground and keep what he finds ? "

That was all very well. It sounded splendid when he was talking it, but it was all shrivelled to rags by the threat of Amama.

Jean knew she would do what she said,



midnight, and season.

he knew the type and he knew the girl. He was badly frightened.

" Though it was found on my own property," said he, " you shall have it back. God knows but I have granted your every wish. See now, it is Wisemann who has the pearl, the big man of the running pictures." Jean paused for a moment and then went on : " Fifteen dollars he lent me, keeping the thing as security. Here is twenty dollars."

He took from his pocket two ten-dollar bills tied round with a bit of coco-nut sennit and, spreading them open, handed them to Amama.

" I had spent the money all but one dollar," said Jean, " but last night with that dollar I won twenty-five from the Chinese gambling men. I was in luck. Take the money to Wisemann and get your pearl and give him five dollars for interest."

Amama heaved a deep sigh and hid the money in her girdle. She rose, and without a word glided off, vanishing past the great tree in the direction of Purvis and Wisemann's camp, whilst Jean, alone with the facts that the money he had won the night before was all but gone, and that Amama, for all his explanations, knew him for a thief, sat for a moment without a movement. Then he seized the fowl by the legs, bashed its body on the ground, flung it to fester in the sun, and, retiring to the house, began to drink gin on an empty stomach.

The movie encampment when Amama reached it was temporarily deserted. Purvis and Wisemann never bothered much about breakfast, and they had gone to the village this morning to see Jarvis, who was a sort of agent for the Burns Philip Company, with a view to getting a lift out of Taheu. They were anxious to quit and ready to work their passage to anywhere out of the God-forsaken

atoll that had "rose up and hit them in the face."

The movie show was "bust," the gunman would never chase the girl in the Humpmobile again, and Charlie Chaplin would jump no more. Purvis, after desperate efforts to sell the projecting machine, had got drunk and smashed it; it was the only pleasure he had had since coming to Taheu.

Having seen Jarvis this morning, they made their way back towards the encampment and the shade of the trees. Purvis was in an evil temper, twelve dollars was all that remained to him after the clear-up of the show; Wisemann, who declared that twenty dollars would buy all that he had in his pockets, was in a more equable mood.

When they reached the trees Amama was waiting for them.

She had taken her seat on a fallen palm trunk with her back to the sagging canvas that had formed the west wall of the theatre, and when she saw them she rose to her feet.

She wasted no words. Holding out the two ten-dollar bills to Wisemann, she demanded the pearl.

Wisemann, the picture of mild surprise, asked her what she meant, and, when she told him, denied knowledge of the whole transaction. He knew nothing of any pearl, Jean François was mad or drunk, he refused to touch the dollar bills, and told her to go.

Purvis looked on, deeply interested. He could not understand the language of Taheu in which they were talking, but he understood the Taheuan word for pearl, which came so often into what they said. The girl was offering Wisemann two ten-dollar notes, she seemed excited; more, she was angry—what could it all be about?

THEN into his foxlike brain came a suspicion of the truth. They were talking of a pearl, and the girl was offering the other money—Wisemann had got a pearl out of Jean François, probably, when Jean was drunk, and the girl was trying to get it back.

Purvis knew quite well that Wisemann had lied to him half an hour ago when he declared that twenty dollars would buy everything in his pockets—and now this! But he said nothing till Amama, giving up the matter, went away, her head bowed, crushed, unable to understand the wickedness of the world that had caught her as in a net.

Then, when she was gone, Purvis turned to the other.

"What was she offering you them bills for?" asked he.

"What bills?" asked Wisemann, who was perspiring and wiping his brow with his sleeve.

"The dollar bills."

"Oh, them! She's crazy, plumb crazy. Wants us to clear out of here, offered me the money if we'd clear out."

"Shucks," said Purvis.

"Whatcha mean?"

"I know all about it right from the bottom up—I saw you."

"Saw me what?"

"Take the pearl off that lousy Frenchman. I was laffin'—laffin' all the time I was while you were handin' out that dope about twenty dollars coverin' what you had in your pockets. Come, bail up; half of that pearl's mine and half your bank roll too, or by the livin' God I'll split."

"You'll what?" asked the other, whose pupils had broadened till his eyes looked black instead of pale blue.

"Go to the French chap that's superintendin' the fisheries and give him the word that you've pinched that pearl off Janedam-his-name. His daughter will back me."

Wisemann contemplated the other for a moment. Purvis, the first sight of whom had frightened Amama, had always been for Wisemann an object of indifference: he had looked on him as a man of no account, an egg to be sucked. The scorpion that had suddenly burst from the egg astonished and frightened him.

His lips pressed themselves together, he looked at Purvis's feet, then his gaze rose to his face.

"We must settle this thing between us," said he; "we've been good partners—I ain't denyin' that I've looked to my own pocket and played my own hand, and I ain't denyin' you've got the bulge on me. Well, we'll split the profits; I can't say fairer than that."

"First and to begin with," said Purvis, "you've got to fork the money out to get us off this damn pie-dish. I ain't goin' to work no passages to Tahiti. What's your bank roll? Here, sit down so's we can talk."

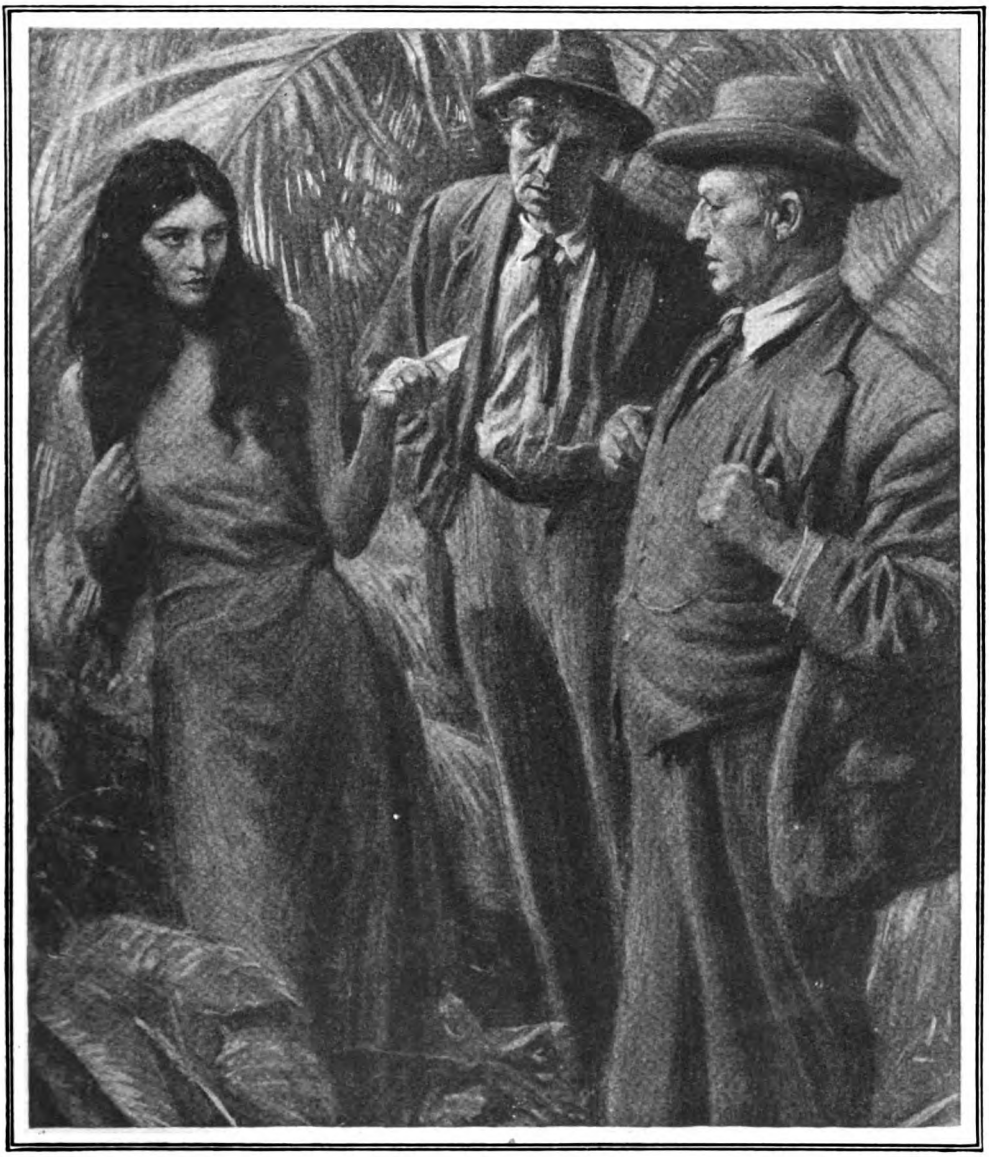
"I am not denyin' I've two hundred and fifty dollars on me," said Wisemann, taking his seat with the other on the fallen tree, "but that's my capital."

"Blow your capital; it'll have to go into the workin' expenses. Now fetch out the pearl."

"It's not with me," said Wisemann. "It's cached away there where the trees are thick—think I'm such a fool as to carry it on me?"

"Well, come and dig it up."

"There you are again," said the other. "Nice fools we'd be muckin' about in the trees with all those women copra workers about. No, sir, come sundown, when they're gone, I'm not sayin'——"



Holding cut the two ten-dollar bills to Wisemann, she demanded the pearl.

"Well, maybe you're right," said Purvis; "gettin' along for then we'll go, you and I; is that fixed in your head?"

"I'll be with you."

"And no tricks, Billy Wisemann."

"Lord, do I look like tricks?" said Billy.

He didn't.

The bagginess under his eyes had increased, and the general flaccidity of his appearance. He turned into the shade of the trees for a sleep, and Purvis, walking off, made for the village, where from Ah Fong, the Chinese seller of odds and ends, he bought a shark knife seven inches long in the blade and keen as a razor.

VIII.

NIGHT ON THE OUTER BEACH.

AN hour before sundown Damea, who had come back from the pearling in order to set his fish-trap in the outer beach pools, was making for the house of Jean François Calabasse when, drawing near

to the glade and the remains of the rag-and-stick theatre, he heard voices as if in argument.

The voice of Wisemann and the voice of Purvis. He disliked these gentry, and, being as inquisitive as a cat, he stopped dead to listen. He could make out little of what they were saying; so, drawing closer and peeping through the trees, he saw them standing facing one another, then he saw Purvis taking Wisemann by the arm and the two walking away together right into the thickness of the groves.

He placed the fish-trap on the ground and followed them; there was something on hand between those two, but what on earth could it be to lead them into the groves?

Damea could move as soundless as a shadow, and when his curiosity was aroused he had four ears and the back of his head was supplied with eyes.

He followed them by sound and sight till they vanished. They had sat down close to a big bread-fruit. He drew closer and heard and saw all.

Wisemann had sat down first.

"Now here we are, Jimmy Purvis," said the fat man as the other took his seat opposite to him.

"Here we are, and I wants to get this matter right with you. Half the pearl, you says, and I'm willin' to agree to that, but it's the question of dollars that's raisin' my hump. See here, J. P. I'm willin' to pay expenses to Tahiti, where we'll cash in the pearl; but it's a bit thick askin' me to split the money, which is workin' capital."

"Well," said Purvis, "I don't want to drive you, Billy; I ain't no shark, and we'll talk of that matter afterwards. No, I don't want to drive you, and I'll say right now, if you acts square about the pearl, I'll take it at that. You pays the fares to Tahiti, which won't be more than forty dollars apiece—and now dig up the joker."

"Which I will," replied Wisemann; "it's under no tree, but safe in my pocket, where it was when I was talking to that piece Amama."

The name made the listening Damea lean forward as Wisemann, putting his hand in his pocket, produced something wrapped up in cotton-wool. He undid the wool, produced the pearl, and held it in the palm of his left hand for the other to see.

Damea, watching, saw the shark-knife flash in Purvis's hand, saw him strike, miss, and fall sideways with something sticking in his chest.

"That does you!" cried Wisemann. "Hell!"

Rolling over, the dying Purvis had got home; swift, like the stroke of a scorpion, the knife was in Wisemann's groin; then, as Wisemann lay screaming like a woman or a seagull, Purvis, his eyes half closed and his teeth bare, struck again, driving the knife into Wisemann's chest this time.

Four beats of a pendulum would have covered the whole tragedy. Purvis lay dead. The other seemed dead, till, all of a sudden, he heaved up, struggled to his knees, the blood pouring from his mouth, and collapsed again, his head on the outstretched arm of the man he had killed.

Damea watched curiously till the form of the big man had ceased heaving and twitching like a new-caught palu; then he came close.

Wisemann had used for weapon an obsidian spear-head, keen as a razor and brittle as glass, with two inches of the haft still adhering to it; he must have prepared this weapon on purpose.

Damea touched each of the bodies with his foot, then he picked up the pearl that was lying on the ground close to Wisemann. He held it in his palm and looked at it, heedless of the creatures at his feet as though they had been two dead crows. The word "Amama" uttered by Wisemann was still in his ears, and this was the pearl he had hidden with Amama. He was sure of that, but he could not understand.

How came it here and how came it that Amama's name had been mentioned?

With the pearl clasped in his hand he turned and ran through the woods, breaking from them near the clearing.

The house of Jean François Calabasse stood open to the winds of heaven. It was all front doorway with no front door, only reed curtains rarely drawn unless in heavy rains.

Jean was in the house snoring. Damea could see into Amama's room, but she was not there. The necklace was there, hanging from a nail on the wall, for in Taheu nobody steals things left in houses, and as Damea stood looking at the necklace it was as though suddenly it spoke. How had Amama obtained it; why for days had she been so depressed; where had Jean Calabasse obtained the money for his festivities?

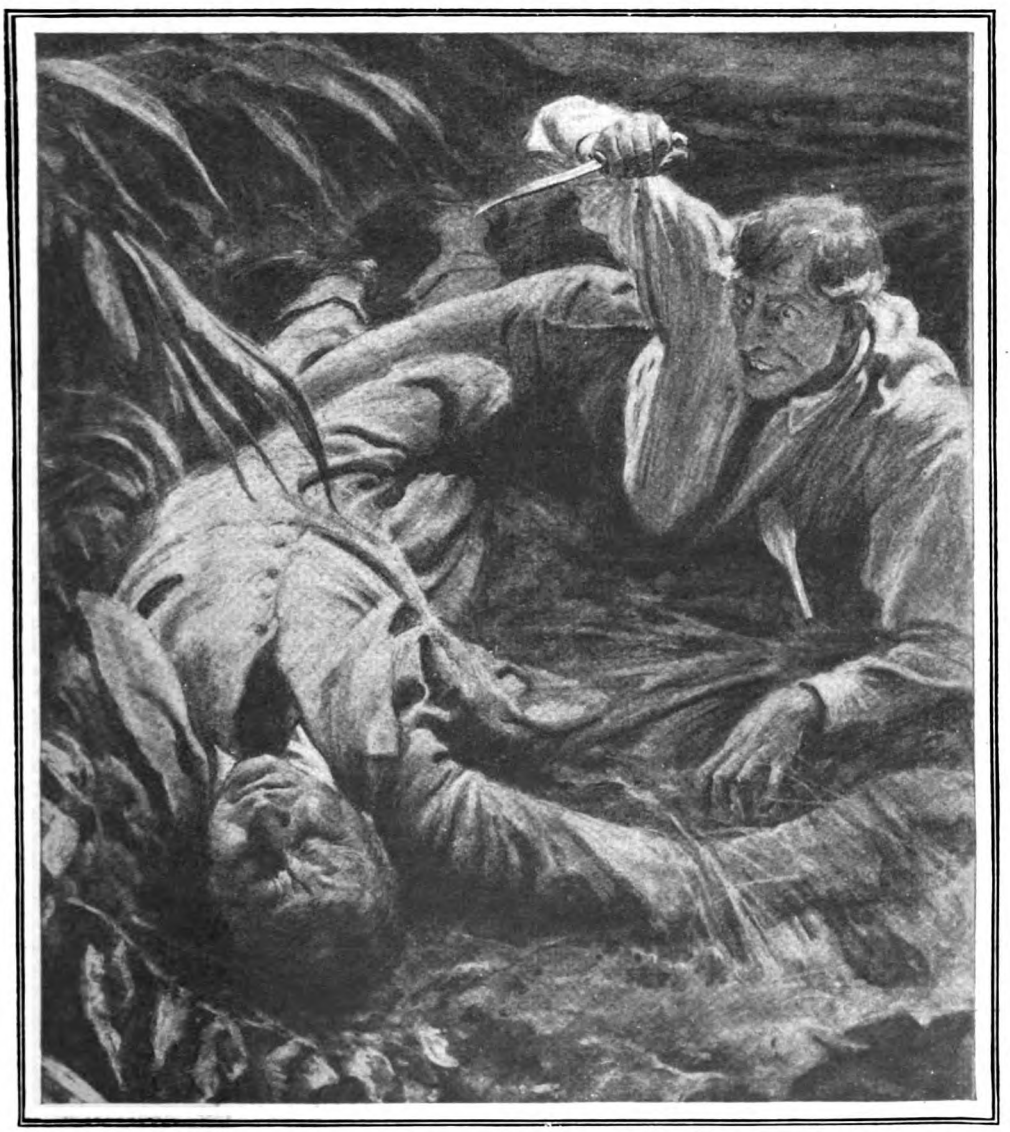
Damea came into the girl's room; he looked about him to see what else she might have bought or obtained beside the necklace; he turned over the mats in the corner, and there, before his eyes, lay the cigarette tin. He picked it up and came outside with it. Yes, it was the tin he had used for hiding the pearl; some of the cotton-wool was still in it. He flung it away amidst the trees as though it had burned him, saw the knife on the shelf by the house side, and, picking it up, ran to the great tree,

where he began to dig, just as Amama had dug, hoping against hope. He found nothing, and, springing to his feet, he flung the knife away from him on to the sands, stood rigid with his hands clenched, and then ran to the knife and picked it up. An onlooker might have fancied him playing some sort of game ; he was : playing a game with Death, for if Amama had shown herself at that moment he would have driven the knife into her heart.

He looked at the knife, turning it over in his hands ; then, taking it by the haft, he flung it far into the lagoon in a storm of rage that turned, all of a sudden, into a storm of tears that cast him on the sands, his face on his arms.

His life's companion had betrayed him, stolen his pearl and sold it.

His left hand still held the pearl grasped tight; he had it safe, he was not thinking of it, and he was no longer angry, but he was broken. Amama had stolen his pearl and sold it. It was as though the sun had stopped shining, as though the lagoon had gone dry, as though the trees had suddenly withered, and it was worse than all these things, which would have happened outside



Purvis struck again, driving the knife into Wisemann's chest.

himself—something inside himself had gone out, dried up, withered.

Amama had betrayed him!

Never had he known that Amama was part of himself; that, though he rarely thought of her, she was part of his mind—never till now.

He rose, shuddering, and came along by the trees. In the little clearing he saw the fish-trap he had dropped when he followed the two men; without knowing what he did he picked it up, and with it in his right hand, and clasping the pearl in his left, he came through the trees towards the outer beach.

He had to keep moving, and the fish-trap acting on his subconscious mind dictated his direction; the purpose for which he had landed that evening was still there, and he was following its direction, unconscious as the dead.

Then he found himself on the outer reef before the low-tide sea, lit by the last of the sunset, and there, by a great pool that glittered like a golden shield, the wind tormenting her black hair, stood Amama.

He dropped the trap.

Her face was turned towards him, and her eyes were fixed on him, and all at once, as he looked at her across the hundred yards of coral that separated them, the anger that had left him returned, but in a new form; slow and dull and burning, urging him neither to strike nor kill nor upbraid, but to come to her, get close to her, and look her in the face.

He came across the coral, his left hand tightly clasped. Close up to her, his hand sprang open and he held it out with the pearl in the palm. Not a word; yet he was so close to her that he could have touched her. Amama, frozen by his look and his silence, gazed at the great pearl; then she fell on her knees and, clasping him by the legs so that he could not move, began to cry out for mercy, mercy towards her father.

"Oh, Damea," cried the girl, "I knew, I knew—but it was too late, he had sold it, he sold it to the strangers. I tried to buy it back, but the big man would not listen to me. Oh, my father! He watched us bury it that night and stole it and sold it to the strangers—your pearl, Damea! I knew, and it has burned my heart away, for it was my father, and here I came to cast myself in the water when the darkness would cover me; here I shall die when the darkness comes, for the shame I cannot bear."

And Damea stood listening, half comprehending; then comprehending, life coming slowly back into his heart, the pearl dropped from his hand to the coral. He had forgotten it—Amama had not betrayed him—she was here the same as of old, and yet changed as though she had become a new being.

He disengaged her arms and raised her to her feet; the tenderness of his touch and the caress of his hand as he raised her body made her dumb—he had forgiven—forgiven her father! Eh! but what was this? He was holding her in his arms, he who had scarcely ever touched her before, his breast to her breast, crushing her to him—why? His lips were kissing her hair, and as she raised her face they fastened on her eyes, her lips, her very soul. Then, half fainting, she knew.

She who had never known love, as he had never known it, till now.

Love suddenly born, yet long conceived between them, love whose seed lay in their earliest childhood, whose flower had been made suddenly to blossom by misery and the crime of Jean François Calabasse.

AS they sat beside each other on the coral in the darkness an hour old, Damea, his arm still around the waist of Amama, leaned forward. The pearl lay where he had dropped it, a milk-white spot in the starshine and within reach of his hand; the pearl that had slain two men and made a thief of Jean François Calabasse and all but killed Amama, the pearl that was wealth in its most beautiful form—but to the mind of this half child a thing deadly and to be dreaded.

He picked it up and rose to his feet, and, standing with the girl by the great dark pool now flooding higher with the incoming tide, he cast the pearl to the water, where it sank, a gleam of phosphorus, followed by a train of tiny golden bubbles.

NEXT MONTH.

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

A PARIS FROCK

ANOTHER "Q. Q." STORY

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

MR. QUENTIN QUAYNE paused a moment in the fluent French he had been talking into the telephone—in that quiet room of his, high above the traffic roar of Piccadilly Circus, he was answering a call from Paris—and looked at his watch.

"*C'est maintenant cinq heures et demie,*" he resumed. "*Bon, je serai chez vous à neuf heures ce soir. Mais oui—ce soir même. A tantôt, alors.*" He put back the receiver, turned to me with his grimly kindly smile. "A little trip to Paris for us, Mr. Creighton. An old client of mine, M. Dieulafoy of the Rue de la Paix—one of the most important jewellers in Paris—is in serious trouble." He pressed the bell upon his desk. Miss Satterthwaite appeared.

"Ah, Veronica, will you 'phone through to Croydon and tell them to have the Number Two or Number Three ready for us in half an hour? And tell Paris to have a car waiting at Le Bourget from eight p.m. onwards. My headquarters will be the Meurice, as usual."

"Very good, Chief." Nothing ever surprised Miss Satterthwaite.

IT was perhaps six-fifteen when one of the Q. Q. Agency's own private machines took off from the hummocky greensward of Croydon Aerodrome, and climbed up into the pale blue of a windless summer evening. It was still quite light when, after a couple of hours in which we had dealt faithfully with a dinner-basket, we banked steeply for the circling descent to the poplar-fringed landing-ground at Le Bourget. The radiance had only just begun to fade from the sky, crystalline above the brownish murk immediately over the house-tops, as our car sped out of the traffic-block at the Place de l'Opéra into the comparative quietude of the Rue de la Paix. My watch marked just nine o'clock. The Q. Q. Agency was nothing if not precise.

A minute or so later, in the private room behind that famous discreetly-luxurious shop—now shuttered to the outside world, of course—where for two generations queens and empresses, femininely entangled in the fascination of priceless jewels, had rubbed shoulders with favourites of the Paris stage languidly doing their best to bankrupt their millionaire admirers—M. Dieulafoy himself greeted us effusively.

"*Ah, M. Quayne—vous venez du ciel!*" he cried, with an unintentional literal exactness, as he clasped the Chief's hand in the pair of his. "You come to save me, *hein?* You will save me? You will find my diamonds?" Little M. Dieulafoy, prosperously rotund in face and figure, was evidently in a state of acute distress.

The Chief dropped into a chair.

"I'll tell you that when you tell me the nature of the trouble," he said, with a quiet smile. "From your telephone message I gathered only that if I did not come at once you were ruined."

Little M. Dieulafoy came nearer.

"M. Quayne, five—four hours ago—who knows?—my safe held the Crown diamonds of—ah!" he threw up his hands, "it matters not which country—that is my secret, a secret I must not reveal—not even to you, M. Quayne. They were entrusted to me for a particular purpose." He dropped his voice to a horrified whisper. "And now, M. Quayne—they are not there!"

"Robbed?" queried Mr. Quayne, laconically.

"Robbed! *Oui, M. Quayne!* Robbed!"

"When did you discover this loss?"

Copyright, 1924, by F. Britten Austin.

"At a few minutes past five. We close at six. I was looking into the street from my shop-door when suddenly something—I know not what—whispered to me to make sure the Crown diamonds were still in the safe. I went down to the strong-room, opened the safe, and—M. Quayne!—the diamonds were no longer there! For a moment I thought I was going to faint. But I locked the safe again and rushed upstairs to telephone to the police. And then suddenly I remembered—the police—a public scandal—my reputation for trustworthiness gone! And then, M. Quayne, I remembered you—you who had done such wonders for me ten years ago!—and I telephone—to London—to you, M. Quayne."

The Chief nodded.

"You say you discovered the absence of the diamonds at a little after five? Your *employés* were still here at that hour?"

"Yes. I shut the shop and drove them all into this room and searched them myself. I found nothing, of course. I sent them all away and searched the premises thoroughly. It was then I telephoned to you. M. Quayne—between four o'clock and five o'clock those diamonds were mysteriously spirited out of that safe to which I alone hold the key!"

"How do you know they were there at four o'clock?"

"I saw them myself. M. Monnier, my chief assistant, had a package which he desired to lock up. He asked me to accompany him to the safe. I did so. I unlocked it myself. I remember looking to see that the diamonds were still there. They were in a small black case. I saw them, moved their position slightly. M. Monnier put in his package—some jewels belonging to a customer—and I locked the safe myself. M. Monnier returned with me to the shop."

"You searched him, I suppose, with the others?"

"M. Quayne," said the little man, "I searched everyone, including myself!"

"And the safe had not been tampered with?"

"No. But see for yourself."

Together we followed M. Dieulafoy down into the strong-room vaults underneath the shop, stopped in front of the huge steel door of a safe. It bore no marks of having been interfered with.

The little jeweller turned the pointers on the dials—it was a combination lock—inserted his key, swung the door open. Ranged on shelves within were piles of jewellers' cases.

"The diamonds were here," said M. Dieulafoy, pointing to one of the shelves.

"And M. Monnier stood at your side, I presume?" Q. Q. remarked.

"Yes," replied M. Dieulafoy, "he stood here." He indicated the side of himself away from the hinges of the safe-door. The Chief quietly stepped to that position.

"And now will you close the safe?" he said.

M. Dieulafoy complied, but before the heavy door had quite swung back there was a sharp little clash on the floor. Mr. Quayne had dropped a bunch of keys with which he had been fidgeting. Almost simultaneously, the two men bent to pick them up. It was Mr. Quayne who retrieved them. M. Dieulafoy turned again to the safe, pushed the door home, turned the key.

Q. Q. smiled.

"And now will you open the safe again and see if anything is missing, M. Dieulafoy?" he said, pleasantly.

M. Dieulafoy unlocked the door again, swung it back, peered within. Instantly he uttered a sharp cry—turned to us, his face more white than ever.

"The pearls of the Comtesse de Saint-Menin!" he gasped. "They were in a small red case! I could have sworn I saw them there a moment ago."

Mr. Quayne smilingly held out a small red case to him.

"Is this it, M. Dieulafoy?" he asked.

The jeweller snatched it from him, sprang the lid open, gave a glance at the shimmering contents, snapped the lid again, switched round on us, his face a study in stupefied astonishment.

"M. Dieulafoy," said Mr. Quayne, grimly amused, "I have shown you how your diamonds vanished. I am prepared to wager that, just as you were closing that door this afternoon, M. Monnier momentarily distracted your attention——"

"*M. Monnier!*" gasped the little jeweller, staring at us in blank incredulity. "Yes—I remember now—he dropped his keys, just as you did—we both bent to pick them up, knocked our heads against each other, in fact—but—but—M. Quayne, I cannot believe that! M. Monnier is my chief assistant, my man of confidence—he has been with me twenty years—there has never been the slightest irregularity——"

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Quayne, "on this occasion he has robbed you. Close your safe again—I will stand away from it this time."

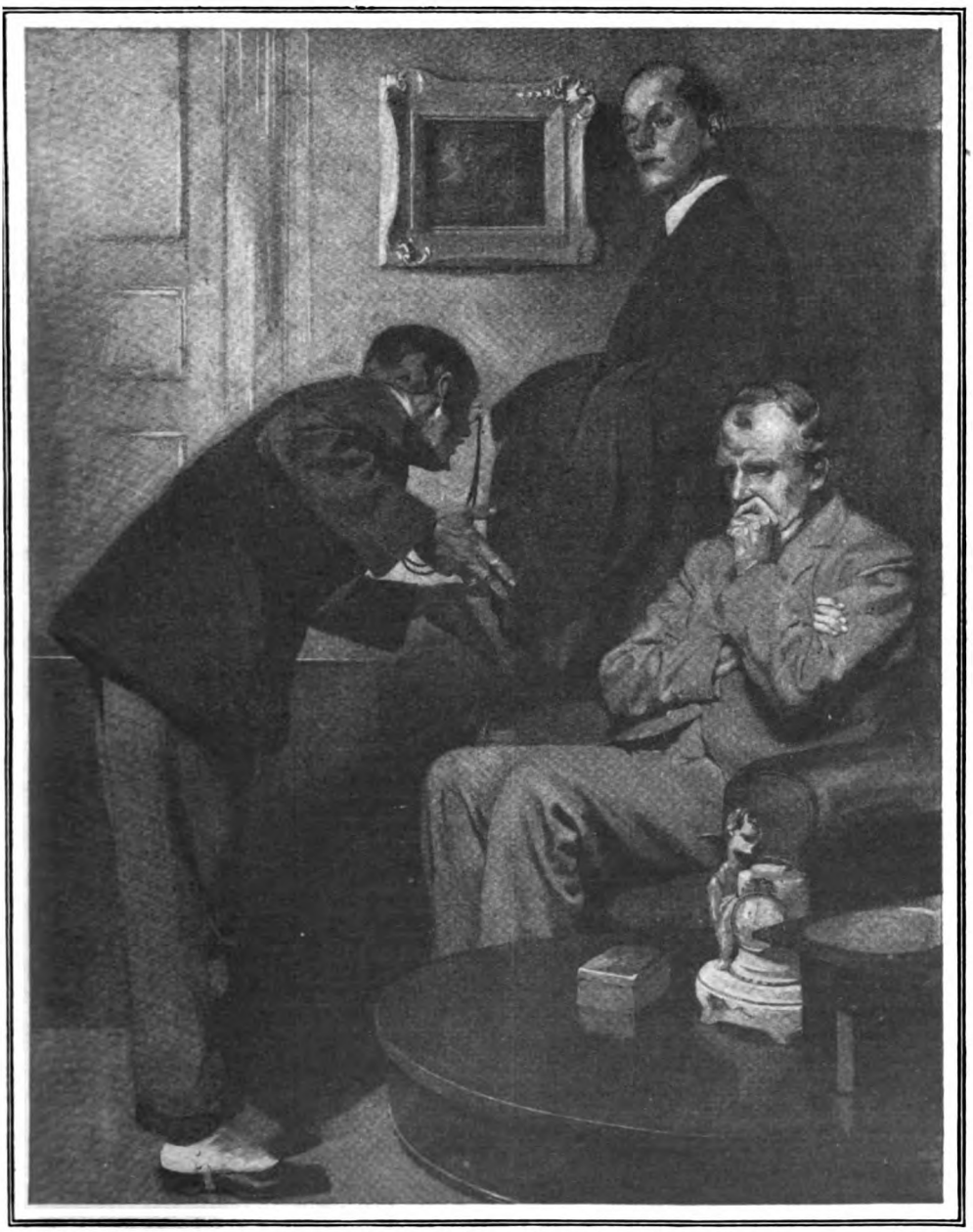
The jeweller locked his safe, and all the way back to the room behind the shop protested his bewildered incredulity of M. Monnier's guilt. Certainly he knew the diamonds were there—but a man of such integrity! And, besides, what had he done with them?

"It was not a small case!" he cried. "It was fifty centimetres long by twenty

broad and fifteen deep—I must have found it on him had he concealed it in his clothes—and I stood at the door and ran my hands over everyone as they went away after six o'clock."

The Chief had dropped himself once more into one of the jeweller's comfortable chairs.

"H'm!" he grunted. "But *before you suspected anything* he could quite easily have carried it up from the strong-room under his coat. Can you answer for M. Monnier's movements after you came up from the safe? Did he communicate with anyone outside the business—or serve any customer, for example?"



"M. Quayne—between four o'clock and five o'clock those diamonds were mysteriously spirited out of that safe to which I alone hold the key."

"Yes. Just after we came from the safe, at four o'clock, he telephoned to a client that an article was ready waiting for him."

"And did the client call?"

"Yes. At twenty-past four. M. Monnier attended to him. The customer took away his parcel—it was a Louis XV. silver inkstand, left for repair."

"Do you know that client? He left his name, of course?"

M. Dieulafoy turned up an entry in a large ledger.

"M. Dufourier, 984, Avenue Kleber."

"And is there such a person? You have a directory there."

M. Dieulafoy got down the directory, turned to the names section, ran his finger down it, shook his head. Then, with a sudden excitement, he turned to the "streets." He swung round to us, his hands quivering as he held the book.

"There is no such number, even! There is no Dufourier in the Avenue Kleber!"

The Chief rose from his chair.

"Depend upon it, your M. Dufourier took away those diamonds. He had probably been waiting for days for the telephone message to say they had been abstracted from the safe. The first step towards finding M. Dufourier is to visit M. Monnier."

TEN o'clock was just striking from a neighbouring church when our car stopped at the address given by M. Dieulafoy, and we climbed three flights of stairs to M. Monnier's flat. The door was opened for us by a tidy-looking *bonne*. M. Dieulafoy introduced himself. M. Monnier was out, the maid informed us—but Mme. Monnier was in. Would we see Mme. Monnier? We would.

We were led into a sitting-room, and a moment or two later a charming little old lady came smilingly towards us. She knew her son's employer, of course.

"It is to see your son that we have come," said M. Dieulafoy, as he bowed perfunctorily over her hand. "M. Monnier is not at home?"

"No, M. Dieulafoy. Jules went out as usual after dinner. You will find him at the Cercle, I expect. He spends all his evenings there, you know. He is a maniac for chess—often it is past midnight before he returns."

"Madame," said M. Dieulafoy, "you will excuse us leaving you abruptly. But we must find your son at once. He is at the Cercle, you say? Which club is that?"

"At the Cercle des Procopiens—Rue Royale," she replied.

Q. Q. put in a word.

"You say he spends all his evenings there, madame?"

"Yes, monsieur. He plays chess—every night—till I know not what hour." She smiled. "He is a chess-maniac, I tell him."

M. Dieulafoy had picked up his hat. His movement of farewell towards the old lady was cut short by the sudden sharp ring of the bell to the outer door.

We paused a moment to hear the maid going to the door—and then we heard the quick run of her feet towards us.

"Madame! madame!" she cried. "Two *sergents-de-ville!* They want M. Monnier!"

The old lady stared round on her.

"Two *sergents-de-ville!*" she repeated slowly, her voice incredulous. "For M. Monnier? Surely, Marie, they have made a mistake?"

But the two policemen had not waited for an answer from the maidservant. They appeared side by side in the room, two stolid figures, twin-like in their uniforms and the voluminous capes about their shoulders.

"Mme. Monnier?" queried one of them, addressing himself to the little old lady.

"Yes, monsieur?" Her dignified acknowledgment was interrogative of the reason for this outrage.

"We hold a warrant for the arrest of M. Jules Monnier, madame. In the name of the law, we require you to allow us to search this *appartement* for him."

"For the arrest of my son!" she exclaimed. "But—this is madness! For what conceivable reason?"

"For the murder of Mlle. Angèle Levasseur, of the Folies Parisiennes, at her flat this evening."

The little old lady gasped—and then laughed hysterically.

"But—but this is fantastic!" she cried. "It cannot be my son you seek. It must be some other of the same name. My son does not know this—this Mlle. Angèle—he has never spoken to an actress in his life! I appeal to you, M. Dieulafoy!" She turned to him. "Have you ever known my son consort with actresses? It is not my son you seek. You have made some absurd mistake!"

The policeman held out a handkerchief to her. I noticed the initials "J. M." embroidered on a corner of it.

"Do you recognize this, madame?" he asked.

She took it, went deathly pale as she examined it.

"Yes," she stammered, "yes—it is—my son's——"

"It was found by the dead body of Mlle. Levasseur," said the policeman. "For the rest, madame, there is no doubt. Though you may be ignorant of it, for the past year M. Monnier has been intimate with

Mlle. Levasseur. He is well known to her maid. To-night he shot her—and dashed away before anyone could stop him."

The poor old lady collapsed at this thunderbolt. Mr. Quayne caught her as she swayed, assisted her to a chair. But her martyrdom was not yet completed.

The telephone-bell rang sharply. One of the policemen went to the instrument, picked up the receiver.

"Hullo! Yes? What? The Hôpital Beaujon? Yes?" He listened. "*Mon Dieu!*" He turned round to the stricken Mme. Monnier.

"Madame," he said, a sympathetic note in his voice, "I regret to tell you that M. Monnier shot himself in the Champs Elysées at ten o'clock this evening. He is now in the Hôpital Beaujon. He still breathes—but if you wish to see him alive you have not a moment to lose."

Stunned though she was, the unfortunate woman had heard him.

"Take me to him," she gasped, groping before her like one blind.

"My car is at your disposal, madame," said Mr. Quayne, as he supported her towards the door.

IN a few minutes we were racing in the Chief's car to the Hôpital Beaujon. A few words of explanation, and a nurse led us to the ward where M. Jules Monnier, a man of about forty, thin-faced and now preternaturally haggard, his eyes fixed in a glassy stare, his face greenish-grey with the approach of death, lay in a narrow bed. As we approached, a flicker of recognition came into his eyes. I saw his lips frame the word "*Maman!*" Then he perceived M. Dieulafoy. He made just the faintest, feeblest gesture for his employer to approach. The jeweller bent over the bed.

"*Je l'ai—donné,*" whispered the dying man, "*à*——" He shuddered and his eyes closed.

"Yes! Given it—given it—*to whom?*" demanded M. Dieulafoy.

But the unfortunate Jules Monnier was dead. His mother collapsed—with one last wild cry—across his body.

Before we left we had a few words of conversation with the doctor who had received Jules Monnier.

"Suicide?" He echoed our query, and shrugged his shoulders. "Apparently. He was shot through the chest. It was in a shrubbery of the Champs Elysées, near the Alcazar, at a few minutes past ten. A *gardien* heard the report, ran towards the spot, and found M. Monnier lying on the ground, a revolver at his side. He was speechless when brought in here."

"H'm!" said the Chief. "I presume his pockets have been emptied. May we see the contents? We may find a clue to our quest."

The hospital authorities made no difficulty in showing us the articles taken from the dead man—a card-case, a bunch of keys, a few loose francs, a wallet containing a couple of hundred francs in notes, and the revolver, of which one chamber had been fired. Q. Q. examined them cursorily.

"And this?" he asked, holding up a tiny scrap of paper.

"That was found in his vest pocket," was the answer.

"*C.E.* 10" was all that was written upon it.

The Chief turned to the senior of the two policemen.

"I would suggest to you that you make quite sure that this is a case of suicide and not of murder, *mon ami*," he said. "It occurs to me that 'C.E. 10' makes an appointment for M. Monnier with someone at ten o'clock in the Champs Elysées—and that that someone may have fired the fatal shot. Suicides very rarely shoot themselves in the chest." He swung round briskly to the little jeweller. "And now I propose we pay a visit to the flat of the unfortunate Mlle. Levasseur."

Mlle. Levasseur's flat was in a street just at the back of the Boulevard Haussmann. All the way there M. Dieulafoy reiterated his bewilderment at the tragedy which had overtaken his trusted *employé*.

"I would never have believed it!" he exclaimed. "Never! M. Monnier was the ideal man for such a business as mine. Ah, if I had only suspected that he had an intrigue with an actress!

"What would you have done?" asked Q. Q.

"*Bon Dieu!* I should have dismissed him on the spot. A business such as mine offers too many temptations for a man obliged to satisfy the thousand and one costly caprices of a *petite femme* of the Folies Parisiennes. And Angèle Levasseur, *pour surcroit!* She is notorious. Already she has ruined two millionaires."

"And what might be the market value of those diamonds?" asked Q. Q.

"In their actual form they would be unsaleable—any dealer of repute would recognize them at once. Recut, they would be worth a couple of milliards of francs."

At the exotically furnished flat of the murdered actress we found a commissary of police. The body had already been removed to the mortuary and the police were engaged in the double task of sealing up the deceased's effects and preparing their report on the tragedy.

We searched, all of us and thoroughly, but we found neither case nor diamonds. The

maid, interrogated, deposed tearfully that her mistress had lunched that day at a restaurant and had returned at four o'clock. At half-past four someone had telephoned, and Mlle. Angèle, in great excitement, had summoned the maid to pack all her trunks for a long journey. And then at half-past eight M. Monnier had arrived—oh, yes, M. Monnier was *intime, très intime,* with madame—had gone into the bedroom where Mlle. Angèle was still busy with her trunks. M. Monnier had seemed very surprised—angry, in fact—he did not seem to know that madame was going away. She had heard voices raised in a violent altercation, and then the report of a revolver-shot. The next moment M. Monnier dashed out of the room and out of the flat before anyone could stop him. The maid had run into the bedroom, seen her mistress lying dead—and had telephoned for the police. She had picked up the revolver which M. Monnier had thrown down on the floor and given it to the policeman.

"Then," said Mr. Quayne, turning round on us, "with what revolver did Monnier shoot himself—if, in fact, he committed suicide? He does not strike me as the sort of man to carry two revolvers. M. le Commissaire, I think you have two distinct murders to deal with. Go on," he said to the maid. "Did anyone else come here this evening?"

"Only M. St. Georges."

"M. St. Georges? Who is he?"

"He is the costumier of the Rue Royale. He was a great friend of madame and of M. Monnier also. They were always together, the three of them."

"H'm! And at what time did M. St. Georges come here?"

"At ten-thirty, monsieur. Just before M. le Commissaire arrived. They had already removed the body"—here the unnerved maid showed signs of a renewal of tears—"and M. St. Georges was terribly shocked to hear the news."

"What did he do then?"

"He took an envelope from the escritoire of madame. I saw it clearly. It was sealed with blue wax. M. St. Georges gave me a hundred francs to say nothing to anyone." The girl was scared beyond equivocation. It was plain that she was telling the absolute truth.

"And then?"

"And then M. St. Georges went away. He had a taxi waiting for him—a taxi with two trunks on the roof."

"M. le Commissaire," remarked Mr. Quayne, grimly, "I think our bird has flown—but it might be as well to investigate M. St. Georges' quarters with the least possible delay."

The commissary agreed. We hastened down to the car, and sped off towards the Rue Royale.

The outer door of the building was open and a lift shot us up to the third-floor *appartement* of M. St. Georges. We pressed the bell and waited, scarcely expecting any response. To our surprise, however, the door opened. A tall, dark-moustached man, handsome in a sinister sort of way—the type born to exploit women—stood before us, demanded our business.

Before the commissary had time to state it, an exclamation broke from M. Dieulafoy.

"That is the man of the inkstand!" he cried. "The man who came to my shop this afternoon!"

The *commissaire de police* pushed his way through the door and curtly informed M. St. Georges that he was suspected of complicity in a diamond robbery and that his premises would be searched.

"You talk Greek to me, M. le Commissaire," he said. "I know nothing of any diamond robbery. If you think it will help you to search these premises, search—and welcome!" With which he bowed to us and calmly lit a cigarette in almost insulting indifference.

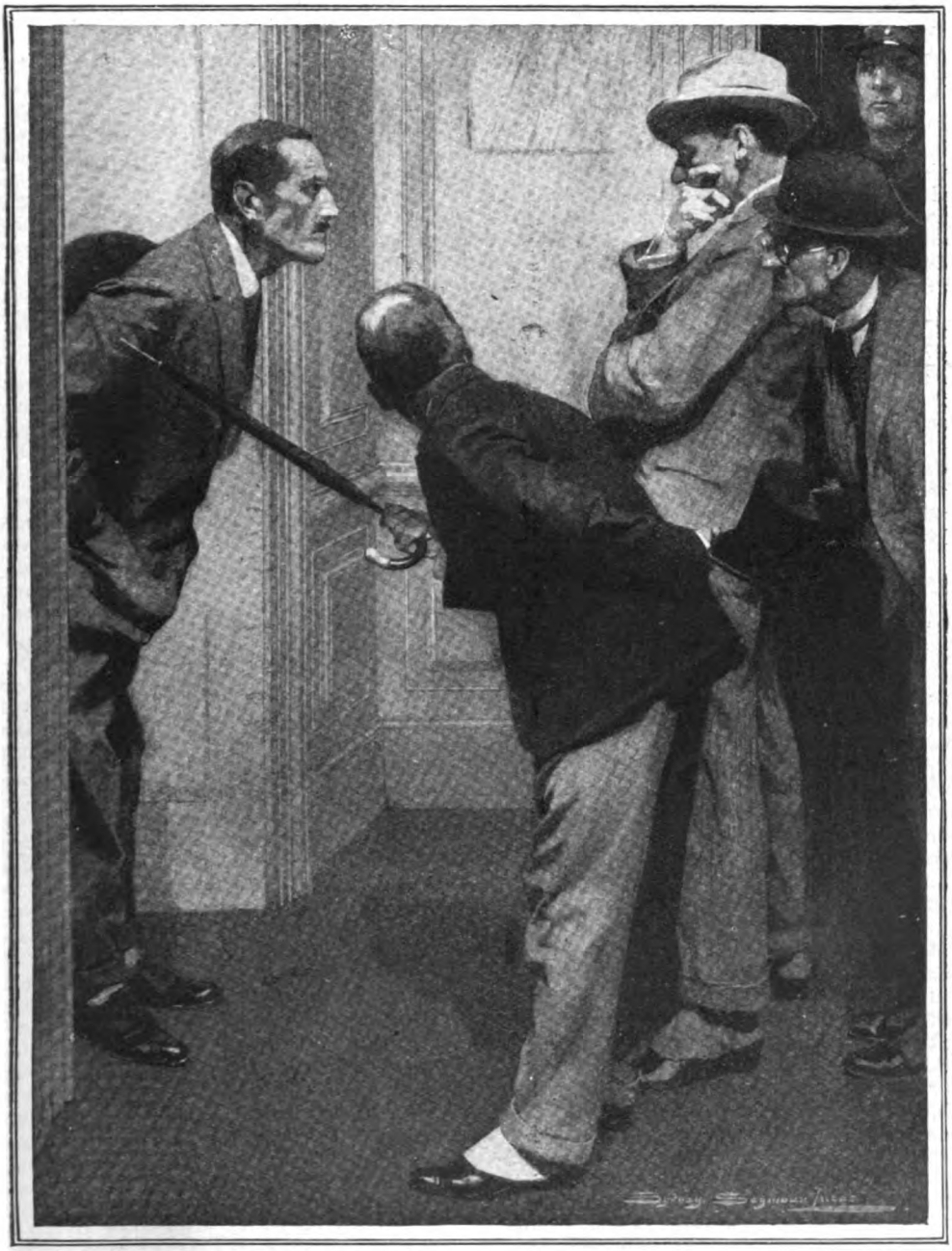
We did search, the commissary, the policeman, Q. Q., the jeweller, and I. We found no trace of the diamonds. But we found one or two other little matters of interest. We found the inkstand. We found two half-packed trunks in a bedroom—and we found in an escritoire a number of notes of hand from Jules Monnier to Gustave St. Georges, totalling in the aggregate nearly four hundred thousand francs.

M. Dieulafoy seized on them.

"Yes!" he cried. "These are genuine signatures! But"—he looked bewildered—"four hundred thousand francs! This, then, is how Monnier financed his friendship with Mlle. Angèle!"

Questioned, M. St. Georges coolly admitted that he was friendly with M. Monnier and had from time to time lent him money, of which these notes were the acknowledgment. "It is not forbidden for a man to lend money to his friend, is it?" he queried, sarcastically. No—he had not heard of M. Monnier's tragic death. He had heard, he admitted, of the murder of Mlle. Angèle—he had called; the maid had given him the news—terrible!—terrible!"

And when we came to making a personal search of M. St. Georges himself, we made another discovery. In his pocket was an envelope sealed with blue wax, and that envelope contained the marriage-certificate, dated a year previously, of Mme. Angèle Dubois, *née* Angèle Levasseur.



"That is the man!" he cried. "The man who came to my shop this afternoon!"

"This, then, is what you took from Mlle. Levasseur's *appartement* at ten-thirty this evening!" said the commissary, sternly.

M. St. Georges shrugged his shoulders.

"I had a perfect right to it," he said, frigidly. "I require it to prove my claim to the succession. My real name is Henri Dubois. Mlle. Angèle was my wife."

"Your *wife!*" The commissary stared at him. "Then"—he waved his hand towards Monnier's IOU's lying on the table—"you deliberately financed Monnier that he might make love to *your wife?*"

" My morals are my own affair, M. le Commissaire. One may be eccentrically generous if one wishes, without interference from the police."

The man's coolness was unshakable.

" To-morrow, M. St. Georges, you may have other things to explain to the authorities," said the commissary, curtly. " For the moment there is not sufficient evidence to justify your arrest. But I warn you, the circumstances are suspicious—and in your own interests I invite you to make no attempt to abscond."

" Thank you for the warning, M. le Commissaire," replied M. St. Georges, with ironical politeness. " I will bear it in mind. And now, since it is very late, I shall be glad if you gentlemen will relieve me of your somewhat unwelcome presence."

There was no more to be said. But outside the building the commissary placed the policeman on guard until he should be relieved, with strict instructions to arrest M. St. Georges if he attempted to leave.

M. Dieulafoy got in the car with Mr. Quayne and myself.

" Well, M. Dieulafoy," said Q. Q., " so far, your case seems to be unravelling itself for us. Let us sum up. This man, St. Georges, or Dubois, undoubtedly encouraged the intimacy of Monnier with his wife and financed his extravagances. Then, having established a hold over him, he prevailed upon him to steal those diamonds and hand them over to him. He left his inkstand until they should be in Monnier's possession, and they were finally slipped across the counter to him with the parcel. Then, in all probability, he telephoned his wife and told her to prepare to accompany him on a journey to-night. She packed her trunks. Monnier went to her flat at his usual time—the hour his mother believed him to be playing chess—and found her in the midst of her preparations. They were probably not only a surprise but a shock to him. Somehow or other, in the quarrel the truth, or some of it, came out. Monnier shot her in his despair. He escaped to meet his death in the Champs Elysées. St. Georges goes to his wife's flat at ten-thirty, ready for immediate departure—and finds her dead. This throws out all his plans, so he returns to his own flat, where we have just left him. And—yes ! "—Mr. Quayne slapped his knee —" there is one thing missing. Why did Monnier go the Champs Elysées at ten o'clock ? Who shot him there ? And who sent him—or passed across the counter—that cryptic note making the appointment ? Who but our friend St. Georges, determined to silence the only man who could betray him ! "

" There is one other thing missing," observed M. Dieulafoy, gloomily. " My diamonds ! Where are they ? "

" Yes—where are they ? " The Chief sat thoughtful.

" *Mon Dieu !* " groaned M. Dieulafoy. " I shall never see them again ! They are probably in the hands of a receiver and being cut up already ! "

" No—for in that case M. St. Georges would have remained quietly in Paris, and received the proceeds in due course. Those diamonds are waiting at the other end of his intended journey, wherever that is."

Where were the diamonds ? Apart from that crucial point, the case continued to develop itself yet a little further with that curious quasi-spontaneity which had characterized it from the start. As at noon that next day we sat in the office of the commissary of police, we were informed that M. St. Georges had been arrested at ten-thirty that morning on the charge of murdering Jules Monnier. A gunsmith in the Rue Lafayette had deposed to selling M. St. Georges the fatal revolver some two months previously.

The police had also succeeded in compiling some sort of *dossier* of that enigmatic individual. The son of a now-deceased costumier in the Rue St. Honoré, he had originally entered his father's business, but soon, under various *aliases*, he had drifted into the career of a " swell mobsman " and jewel-thief. Between 1905 and 1912 he had undergone two terms of imprisonment. In 1914 he had been mobilized and transferred to the telegraphic service of the Army. In 1919 he had been convicted of an attempted theft of pearls from a jeweller in the Avenue de l'Opéra. In 1923, under his real name of Dubois, he had married Angèle Levasseur, and a few months previously had established himself in his paternal trade of costumier in the Rue Royale as M. St. Georges. His *clientèle* had been chiefly among the lesser lights of the *demi-monde*, and only moderately lucrative. It was furthermore put beyond doubt that he had been closely intimate with Jules Monnier and had wholeheartedly encouraged that unfortunate man in his costly infatuation with Mlle. Levasseur, or Mme. Dubois, as she really was (though the fact had been kept closely secret)—to the extent of financing him to the tune of nearly four hundred thousand francs. It looked, indeed, as Mr. Quayne had surmised, like a cynical conspiracy to get the jeweller's trusted assistant into his toils.

But there was absolutely nothing to indicate complicity in the disappearance of the diamonds. The establishment in the Rue Royale had been closely watched from the time we left it until M. St. Georges had been arrested at ten-thirty. The letters which had arrived by the morning's mail had been

merely business documents. No letters had been sent out. The telephone—specially watched from the Exchange—had not been used. The *employées* had arrived at nine-thirty, and at ten o'clock one of them had come out with a parcel for the post. The policeman on duty had stopped her and examined the package. It was a cardboard box containing a dress for dispatch to a client. The policeman had taken out the dress and satisfied himself that it contained no message of any sort. M. St. Georges must have had a shrewd suspicion that his arrest was more than possible, but if he had accomplices to whom—one would have thought—he would wish to communicate the whereabouts of the diamonds (presuming that he had received them), he had made absolutely no attempt to utilize the interim of liberty accorded to him. He was now in prison. To the charge against him he had replied merely by coolly contemptuous denial.

That was the position. We were invited to be present at the preliminary investigation by the *juge d'instruction* the next morning.

We duly attended, M. Dieulafoy, Q. Q., and myself. M. St. Georges was brought in between a couple of policemen. To the accusatory interrogation of the curtly-hostile *juge d'instruction*, he replied with an exasperating and cynical nonchalance. It was whim that he had given the false name of Dufourier in M. Dieulafoy's shop. Whim that he had connived at the association of his wife with the jeweller's assistant. Whim that he had financed M. Monnier in his intrigue. Had he not a right to his whims ?

" I assert that you conspired to get M. Monnier into your power, that you prevailed on him to rob his employer, that you received the stolen property, and that in order to cover your tracks you murdered M. Monnier that same evening ! " the *juge d'instruction* thundered at him, voice and aspect formidable, crashing his fist upon the desk in emphasis.

M. St. Georges shrugged his shoulders.

" It is merely your assertion, M. le Juge." He smiled politely. " I am commencing a civil suit against the authorities for unlawful detention."

" Where are those diamonds ? "

" Where, indeed ? Why not consult a fortune-teller ? "

For two hours the *juge d'instruction* thundered in vain against his nonchalant shrug of the shoulders, his supercilious smile, his cool repudiation of the charges against him.

M. Dieulafoy was in despair. The case leaked out into the newspapers—the precise nature of the missing diamonds only being concealed—and became the sensation of the hour.

IN the meantime, the Chief and myself worked hard from morning to night on every clue or ghost of a clue that came our way or that was evolved from our long deliberations. But utterly without result. Not the most rigorous inquiry could discover any possible accomplice. St. Georges had apparently broken with all his old associates when he had started his costumier's business. Only one hypothesis remained. He had mailed the diamonds to himself, and they were lying in some distant post-office awaiting his call. But how discover which parcel among the myriads of postal packets ? How discover even which post-office ?

Thus matters stood when after a week we again received an invitation to attend the bureau of the *juge d'instruction*. The prisoner was waiting outside in the corridor. We found the commissary of police in conversation with the magistrate. He greeted us like old acquaintances.

" Ah, M. Quayne ! " he said. " What do you make of this ? "

He held out a letter he had been discussing with the *juge d'instruction*. I read it over the Chief's shoulder.

" *M. le Chef de la Sûreté,—*

" *Although I am quite innocent of any complicity in the affair with which M. St. Georges is charged, I can indicate to you where is the packet that you seek, on condition that M. St. Georges is first released and that the prosecution against him is relinquished.*"

It was signed " Marie Leroux," and dated from Villers-en-Amont.

" Has that any value, do you think, M. Quayne ? " asked the commissary.

The Chief pondered the letter.

" It arrived yesterday," said the commissary. " I immediately telegraphed to the local police. Here is their report." He handed over a long telegram.

" *Marie Leroux, thirty-five, unmarried, formerly telegraphist in the service des postes at Arcis-sur-Marne. Inherited small property at Villers from her uncle in* 1922. *Resigned from postal service and came to reside at Villers. Reputation excellent, has no friends, never receives either letters or telegrams. Has not received any letter or telegram or visit for past month.*"

" H'm ! " said the Chief. " If she has received no communication from the outside world for the past month, it is difficult to see how St. Georges could have told her what he has done with the diamonds. But—Arcis-sur-Marne ? It is at least possible that St. Georges made her acquaintance during the war, is it not ? She may know something of his habits."

" Bring in St. Georges ! " commanded the magistrate.

The prisoner was brought in, as coolly self-confident as ever. The *juge d'instruction* smiled cynically at him.

"Own up, Dubois!" he said. "Your accomplice has confessed."

M. St. Georges lifted his eyebrows.

"Very interesting," he replied, coolly. "An old trick, M. le Juge. Perhaps you will tell me the name of that mythical accomplice?"

The magistrate smiled at him confidently.

"Certainly. Mlle. Marie Leroux of Villers-en-Amont." He held up the long police telegram.

If we expected any collapse of the prisoner, we were disappointed. He continued to smile.

"Pooh! Some hysterical woman who craves notoriety."

"You persist that you do not know her?"

"I have never heard of her in my life."

"That we shall see. And this charge of murdering Jules Monnier—have you anything more to say?"

Once more St. Georges shrugged his shoulders.

"I have already admitted it." (He had, in fact, admitted it during the week.) "It was a *crime passionnel*. I knew his friendship with my wife. I did not know that he was her lover. When I discovered it, I killed him. The jury will acquit me."

"Not if we can prove that his death was part of the scheme to rob M. Dieulafoy," snarled the magistrate, exasperated by the accused's nonchalance.

St. Georges continued to smile.

"That you must prove, M. le Juge," he said, politely.

And that was all we could get out of him. When he had been removed once more we looked at each other.

"And this letter?" queried the commissary, picking it up again. "I am strongly impelled to go to Villers-en-Amont and investigate."

"As M. Dieulafoy's representative, I should like to accompany you," said the Chief.

"By all means, M. Quayne." The commissary was cordial.

IN the hot noon of the next day, the Chief and I stood in the *salle-à-manger* of the little inn at Villers-en-Amont, waiting for a hungrily anticipated lunch to be served. The commissary had gone off for a few words with the local post-mistress. We stood and looked out of the window, while behind us the landlady laid the table for our lunch.

The Chief engaged her in casual conversation, learning what he could of the place and its inhabitants.

"*Ah, non, monsieur,*" said the voluble old dame, "nothing happens in this tomb of a place. *C'est comme mort. Le monde comme il faut, ça n'existe pas ici.* The château is empty. There is only M. Benêt, the *curé*—Mlle. Pichon, his niece—and Mlle. Leroux, who lives at the white house you see there on the hill."

"Mlle. Leroux?" said Mr. Quayne. "I once knew a Mlle. Leroux. Did this Mlle. Leroux ever live at Bordeaux?"

"No, monsieur. She came from Arcis-sur-Marne, in the war area. She was a telegraphist at the post-office there. And then her uncle died and left her his house and she came to live here. *Mais!* there she is!" The hostess of the Soleil d'Or pointed through the window to a quiet-looking woman in a white muslin dress who passed in the glare of the sunshine outside. "*Ah, qu'elle est fière avec sa robe de Paris!*"

"A dress from Paris?" said Mr. Quayne, with a smile. "But how do you know it is a dress from Paris?"

"Ah, monsieur, in a little place like this one knows everything. Mlle. Leroux received that dress from Paris a week ago. The *receveuse* at the post-office told me it came from Paris, for she noticed the post-mark on the box. And Mlle. Leroux is so proud of it that she has worn it ever since. *Elle est bien chic, tout de même,*" commented the old woman as she contemplated the white figure now climbing up the hill towards the little house just visible through the trees above.

At that moment the commissary returned and we sat down to lunch. He shook his head to our inquiry.

"A little woman of retiring and blameless life," he said. "And she has received nothing by post or telegraph for many months. The post-mistress is quite sure."

"Except a dress from Paris," said Mr. Quayne, with a dry smile.

"Except a dress from Paris," agreed the commissary. "But there was no letter in the box. The post-mistress is also quite sure of that, for the string had come undone and she had the curiosity to look inside. At least, that is what the post-mistress said."

"Was there any indication of the sender on the box?" asked Mr. Quayne.

"None. I inquired particularly."

"H'm! Well, after lunch we'll interview Mlle. Leroux and hear what she has to say for herself."

After lunch, accordingly, the three of us climbed the hill to Mlle. Leroux's little white house. We were admitted by a typical country *bonne à tout faire*. Yes, Mlle. Leroux was at home. Would we wait here for her?

She came in a moment later—a thin, shy-looking little woman with a large nose and tragic eyes. She was wearing the Paris frock which had caused such comment in the village, and I looked at it with an involuntary interest. It was a simple enough affair in soft white muslin-like material, with a spiral design in little blue beads on the corsage, and a zigzag design in similar beads around the hem of the skirt.

The commissary stated our business with a politeness that did not prevent him from being perfectly explicit. M. St. Georges was in prison on the charge not only of robbery but of murder, and in no circumstances short of a verdict of acquittal by a jury could he be released. But, if Mlle. Leroux had any knowledge of the missing packet of diamonds, it was her duty as a French citizen to declare the fact.

Little Mlle. Leroux did not blench. She pressed her thin lips together as she listened, and I thought I saw the tragic expression of her eyes go a shade more tragic.

"I will only reveal what I know if M. St. Georges is released," she said, firmly.

"But why do you take this interest in this man?" persisted the commissary "What is he to you?"

"He is my husband."

"Your husband! But—pardon me, mademoiselle—madame—Dubois, or M. St. Georges, was married to the actress who was shot—Angèle Levasseur."

"He married me at Arcis-sur-Marne in July, 1918," said the little woman. "He was then a telegraphist in the army. I can show you the certificate."

"He is, then, a bigamist—as well as a thief—and perhaps worse."

"Very probably," agreed the little woman. "I can believe anything of him. But he is nevertheless my husband. And he has put his trust in me. I cannot abuse it."

"Madame," said the commissary, "this obstinacy will not help you. If you know what has become of the objects stolen by Dubois, he must have communicated with you. You will put me to the necessity of searching your house to find his letter."

"You may search," said Mme. Dubois. "You will find nothing."

"How, then, did he communicate with you?"

Mme. Dubois shrugged her shoulders.

"It is useless to question me, M. le Commissaire," she said. "You can even put me in prison—but you will learn nothing. I will never wantonly betray my duty to my husband, however worthless he may be."

There was no escaping the definiteness of this ultimatum. The commissary turned to Q. Q. He shrugged his shoulders as he spoke.

"I am afraid, M. Quayne, there is nothing to do but to return to Paris for instructions. And you, madame, I fear will find yourself in prison as an accomplice."

"He is my husband," she repeated. "I have already suffered so much through him that I can endure that. I cannot betray his trust."

"Well, M. Quayne," said the commissary, "we will return to Paris. But before we go, we will give ourselves the satisfaction of searching this house."

MR. QUAYNE had stood silent, his hands in his trouser pockets, during this conversation, apparently lost in thought. He started as if suddenly awakened to present realities at the commissary's words and took his hands sharply from his pockets. As he did so he accidentally drew out a handful of small change, which fell on the floor and rolled all over the room. He went down on his knees to pick the coins up.

"Pardon, madame," he said, as he groped around her skirt for them. "Pardon —*ah, encore une pièce!*" He crawled round to the other side of her.

She stepped back and stood watching him frigidly.

He rose and turned to the commissary.

"I will willingly assist you in your search, *mon cher confrère*," he said, "but first"—he took out his watch and glanced at it—"I have an urgent telegram to dispatch. If you will accompany me to the telegraph office, we will then return to search Mme. Dubois' house, if you still think it worth while. Frankly, I myself accept madame's story. We may search, but we shall find nothing." He smiled at her.

Very reluctantly the commissary acceded to what he plainly showed he thought was an ill-timed request. We took a provisional leave of Mme. Dubois and walked down to the telegraph office in the village.

The commissary was not a little surprised at the telegram written out by Mr. Quayne, and handed to him for official signature.

"*Chef de Police, Le Havre.*

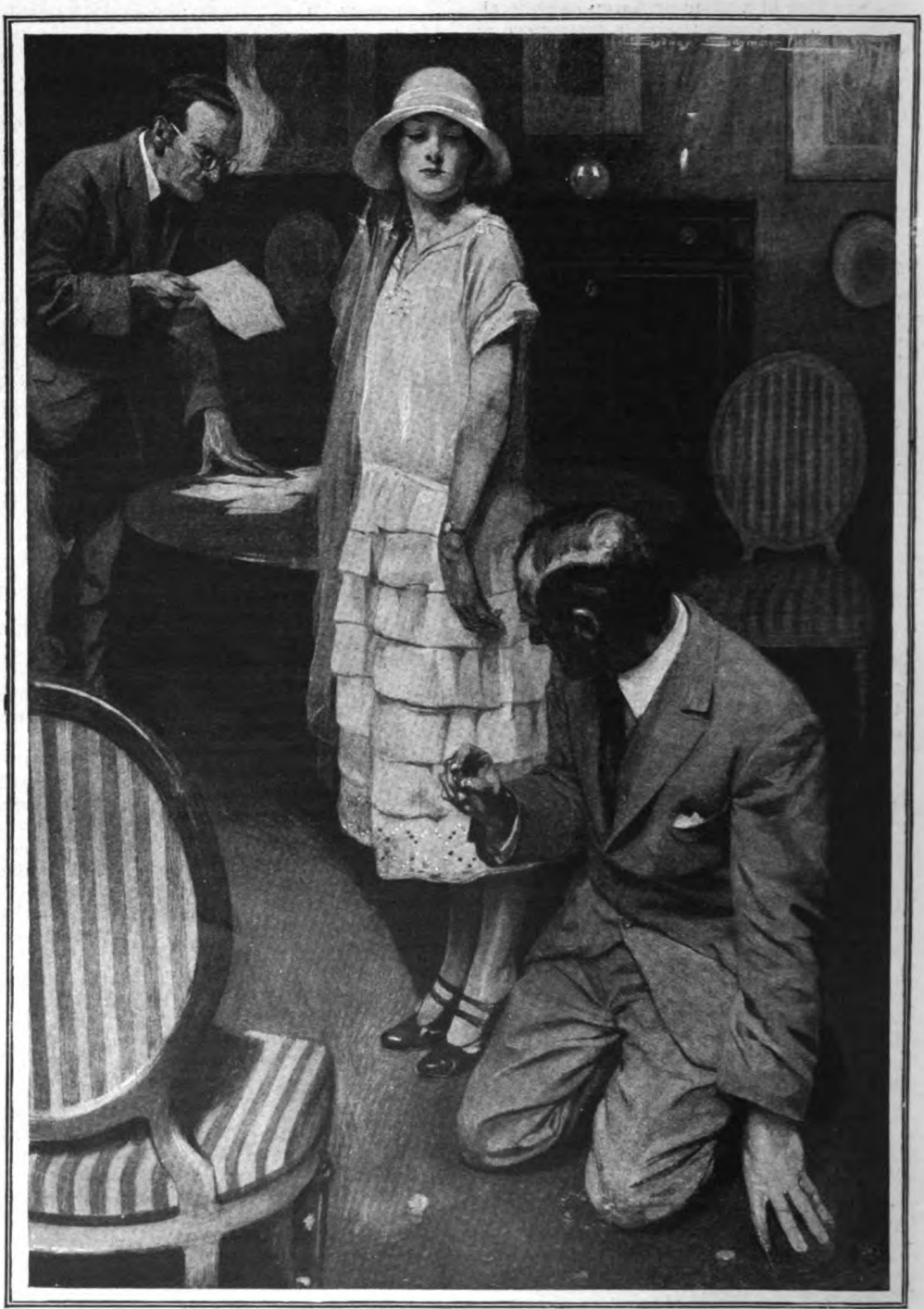
"*Examine postal packet name Madame Dubois waiting poste-restante Havre report here.*"

He was even more astonished when an hour later, during which Mr. Quayne had teased both of us by a smiling but complete refusal to answer questions, a telegram came for us at the Soleil d'Or.

"*Commissaire de Police, Villers-en-Amont.*

"*Packet found contains twenty-one large diamonds corresponding with information in case St. Georges.—Chef de Police, Le Havre.*"

"M. Dieulafoy's diamonds," said Mr.



"Pardon, madame," he said, as he groped around for the coins. She stepped back and stood watching him frigidly.

Quayne, succinctly, as he passed across the telegram and regarded us with his enigmatic smile.

"But when or how did Mme. Dubois confess this to you?" exclaimed the commissary, staring at Q. Q. as at a magician.

"She did not confess," replied the Chief, chuckling at our complete mystification.

"Then by what miracle did you discover her secret?"

"By using my eyes," said Mr. Quayne. "If you had looked a little more closely at Mme. Dubois' new Paris frock, you would have noticed that it had a design on the corsage"—he sat down, took out a pencil, and opened a page of his notebook—"in blue beads. If you had looked a little more closely still you would have seen that the beads were of two distinct shades, one darker than the other, and rather irregularly disposed. Suppose we represent them like this——" He drew a spiral of little circles, some open and some filled in.

"Does that convey anything to you?" We both shook our heads. "No? Well, assume that the open circles are dots and the closed ones dashes, and follow round the spiral. You both know the Morse code, I presume?"

"*Voir bord!*" exclaimed both of us, as we read the words.

"Precisely. 'See the hem.' I proceeded to see the hem by groping about on the floor for the money I so carelessly dropped. And I saw a design in beadwork like this——" He drew again, quickly—

"——read following the zigzag."

"*Chercher paquet Mme. Dubois P.R. Havre garder pour moi me fie à toi Henri,*" read the commissary.

"Exactly. 'Fetch packet addressed Mme. Dubois poste-restante, Havre, keep it for me, I trust in you, Henri,'" said Mr. Quayne.

"But why did he do this?" The commissary was still a little puzzled

"It is easy of deduction," smiled the Chief. "St. Georges had posted the packet to Havre to the name of Mme. Dubois. He intended to fetch it—on his way to America—with Angèle Levasseur, who you will remember could prove herself by her marriage-certificate to be Mme. Dubois. But Angèle Levasseur was murdered. M. St. Georges was in a quandary. Then he bethought himself of that other and rightful Mme. Dubois, in whose fidelity he was sure he could trust. But, of course, he could not risk a letter. He spent that night after we had left him in doing a little embroidery work on a gown he had in stock and getting it ready to post as a present to Mlle. Leroux in the morning. That was the dress examined by the policeman just before St. Georges was arrested. Mlle. Leroux naturally closely examined this strange and unexpected present—and equally naturally, to a professional telegraphist, the dot and dash sequence of the two shades of blue beads on the spiral would soon became apparent. It is possible that she had already received messages from her husband in that ingenious manner. We shall probably never know this. But M. Dieulafoy has his diamonds, and I trust M. St. Georges will get his deserts. This definitely proves his share in the robbery, and I think the jury will prefer to regard his killing of Jules Monnier as the suppression of an inconvenient accomplice rather than as the romantic *crime passionnel* he claims it to be."

"What beats me," I said, "is why that woman should have gone about wearing such a dangerous frock, with its secret message plain for all the world to see."

Q. Q. smiled at me.

"Feminine vanity, my boy—the clue to many mysteries. What Frenchwoman could resist showing off a dress straight from Paris —a miracle of elegance in an out-of-the-way place like this? Naturally, she wouldn't bother to take off the embroidery and spoil its smartness. She would feel certain that no one would suspect it to contain a code-message. Not the first time in history that feminine vanity has betrayed feminine fidelity, my boy—and there's many a curious story to be spelt out of a Paris frock, though not often so easily as this."

"*Monsieur a bien raison,*" observed the *commissaire*, profoundly.

TRUST MONEY

by

W. W. JACOBS

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL OWEN

THE night-watchman set his lips and shook his head.

"You can't learn people," he said, firmly; "it ain't to be done. They all know better than wot you do, and the more iggernerant they are the more they are satisfied with themselves. I once wasted a whole morning telling my missus 'ow to make a steak-pudding, and arter it was done we 'ad to give it to the people next door. She's never forgot it, and to hear 'er talk—if you didn't know her—you'd think it was my fault. The way she twists things round would surprise anybody as wasn't married."

He gazed meditatively at a waterman's skiff tossing in the wash of a passing tug and shook his head again before continuing.

Even experience don't learn people. One chap I know used to save 'is money in a little tin money-box. He 'ad 'arf a ounce o' baccy a week and no beer. The box was so full o' sixpences he was thinking of getting another, when his wife's brother lost 'is job and didn't get another till the box was empty.

You'd ha' thought that would 'ave taught 'im a lesson, but it didn't, and he'd pretty near got another box full when 'is wife 'ad the artfulness to break her leg and 'ad to go to the seaside for a fortnight to get well. He's saving up agin now for wot 'e calls a rainy day. He'll get it all right, and somebody else'll get the money.

Sailormen never learn anything. If they did they wouldn't be sailormen. They're like children that never grow up. It don't matter where they go ashore with their money, they always go back aboard agin without it.

I remember one time when old Sam Small was ashore with Peter Russet and Ginger Dick 'aving wot they called a rest; their idea of a rest being spending 'arf the day in bed and the other 'arf leaning up agin the bar of a public-'ouse telling fairy-tales to the barmaid. They was like three twins for the fust few days, and then Sam wouldn't 'ave nothing more to do with 'em owing to them telling the barmaid at the Turk's Head—a very nice gal with yeller 'air and black eyes—that he 'ad got a wife and thirteen children at Melbourne.

He walked 'ome in front of 'em as if they wasn't there, and when 'e shut the front door he seemed to 'ave the same idea. Ginger noticed it most—being just behind 'im. They 'ad words about it when they got upstairs, and Sam told 'em plain that he never wanted to see their faces agin; not even if they washed 'em.

He purtended to be asleep while they was dressing next morning. His eyes was screwed up tight, and it didn't seem as if anything could open 'em, till Ginger said 'e thought he 'ad passed away in 'is sleep and asked Peter to get a pin and make sure. Sam woke up then, and, arter he 'ad finished speaking, Ginger and Peter said they never wanted to see *his* face agin.

They went off by theirselves, and arter a time Sam got up and went off by 'imself. He didn't see anything of Peter or Ginger at all that day, but from wot the barmaid 'ad to say about 'is grandchildren 'e found they 'ad spent a lot o' time drinking beer and telling more lies at the Turk's Head.

He sat up in bed and spoke to 'em about it when they came in that night, but they wouldn't listen to 'im. They said that 'is troubles didn't concern them and they'd be thankful if he'd take 'em somewhere else.

"We've done with you," ses Ginger.

"For ever," ses Peter. "And my advice to you, Sam, is to leave off afore you bursts a blood-vessel. Anybody might think the 'ouse was on fire."

Sam didn't speak to them at all arter that and they didn't speak to 'im, but they 'ad a great deal to say about 'im to each other when 'e was in the room. It was wot Ginger called a nasty subjeck, but they never seemed to get tired of it.

Copyright, 1924, by W. W. Jacobs.

Sam 'ad made up 'is mind to leave 'em and go off on his own, and then 'e came 'ome one night so full of excitement 'e forgot all about it. He came into the room like a schoolboy and gave 'em such a nice smile they thought he 'ad lost 'is reason. Then he done a little dance all by 'imself in the middle of the room and sat down on 'is bed and laughed.

"I've come into a forchin," he ses to Peter as the two of 'em stood staring at 'im. "Leastways, I shall to-morrer night."

Ginger coughed. But not a disagreeable sort of cough, mind you.

"Come into a forchin?" he ses. "'Ow?"

Old Sam didn't seem to hear 'im. He sat on 'is bed all rosy with smiles and looking straight at the chest o' drawers as though 'e saw a pile of gold on top of it.

"And I owe it all to you and Peter, Ginger," he ses, bending down to undo 'is boots. "If you 'adn't been misbe'aved, and carrying on like a couple of bald-faced monkeys purtending to be men, I shouldn't 'ave gone off on my own, and if I 'adn't ha' gone off on my own I shouldn't 'ave met 'em."

He came in like a schoolboy and done a little dance all by 'imself in the middle of the room.

"Met who?" ses Ginger, who was too excited to take any notice of wot he 'ad said about monkeys.

"Two o' the best," ses Sam; "two gentlemen whose on'y objeck in life is to do good to their fellow-creechers. They told me so theirselves."

"Did you stand 'em drinks?" ses Peter, catching Ginger's eye.

"You've got a low mind, Peter," ses Sam, shaking his 'ead; "you ought to be more careful who you go about with. I've 'ad six drinks to-night, or maybe more, and I didn't pay for one of 'em. They wouldn't let me."

"You don't always try very 'ard," ses Peter, who was beginning to lose his temper.

"Wot 'ave they got to do with your forchin?" ses Ginger.

"It's coming through them," ses Sam, "and if you and Peter was diff'rent, if you was on'y 'arf men instead of—of being wot you are, I would get forchins for you too. There's plenty more where mine's coming from."

"Where's that?" ses Ginger, trying to speak off-hand.

Sam turned deaf agin, and was just going to get into bed when Ginger stopped 'im gentle-like and turning down the bed-clo'es took out a 'air-brush, an old horse-shoe, a lump o' soap, and a few other things wot 'im and Peter 'ad put there.

"The 'orse-shoe was for luck, Sam," he ses, with a smile. "P'r'aps it's through that you got your forchin."

Sam looked at 'im as if he was looking at a dust-bin with a bad smell, and then without a word he got into bed and, putting his 'ead on the piller, shut 'is eyes and went straight off to sleep.

GINGER woke up the next morning dreaming that the 'ouse was on fire. The room was full o' smoke, but the moment 'e got 'is eyes open he saw that it was made by Sam, who was sitting up in bed smoking an enormous cigar with a red-

and-gold band stuck on it. He purtended not to see that Ginger was looking at 'im, and the airs and graces he see fit to give 'imself with that cigar nearly made Ginger choke. Peter Russet woke up then, and, arter he 'ad sniffed and sniffed as if 'e couldn't believe his nose, 'e asked Sam in a nasty voice where he 'ad pinched it from.

"It was give to me by one o' the gentlemen I was speaking of," ses Sam, knocking the ash off down 'is neck by mistake. "He's got a gold case full of 'em."

"Gold case?" ses Ginger.

"With dimonds on it," ses Sam. "He said 'e would 'ave liked to give it to me, on'y it was a birthday present from 'is little boy wot died of whooping-cough."

Ginger scratched his 'ead, and 'e kept on scratching it till Sam said as 'ow it was vulgar, and asked 'im to go out of the room to do it.

"But who are they?" ses Peter Russet, arter Ginger 'ad quieted down a bit.

"Two gentlemen," ses Sam; "two gentlemen wot knows another gentleman when they sees 'im."

He laid down on 'is back and blew smoke up to the ceiling, until Ginger and Peter sat down on Ginger's bed and tried to swaller their pride and ask him to tell 'em all about it. Ginger tried fust, but he 'adn't swallered enough, and when Sam sat up in bed and told 'im part of wot he thought of 'im, Peter took his side and said that if Ginger 'ad on'y been born without a mouth it 'ud be much better for 'imself and everybody else. He gave Ginger a poke in the ribs with 'is elbow to keep 'im quiet, and said that if anybody deserved to 'ave a forchin given 'im it was Sam Small.

"One o' the best," he ses, giving Ginger another poke with 'is elbow.

"We all 'ave our faults, Peter," ses Sam, with a kind smile, "else we should all be angels."

"There ain't no fat angels," ses Ginger, pushing Peter's elbow away. "They wouldn't look nice. All the angels I've seen in pikchers 'ave got beautiful figgers."

Peter gave it up then, and arter telling Ginger in a whisper wot a fool 'e was, he picked up 'is trousers off of the floor and began to dress. Neither of 'em took any more notice o' Sam, and arter laying still for a time watching 'em wash and telling Ginger that the soap wouldn't bite 'im he began talking to 'em of 'is own free will.

He told 'em of a nice, comfortable little pub in a turning off the Mile End Road wot he 'ad found on the evening before. A little pub—as clean as a new pin, and as quiet and respectable as a front-parlour. Everybody calling the landlady "Ma," and the landlady calling most of 'em by their Christian names and asking arter their families. There was two poll parrots in cages, with not a bad word between 'em—except once when a man played the cornet outside—and a canary that almost sang its little 'art out.

"Wot about the two gentlemen that took a fancy to you?" ses Ginger.

Sam looked at 'im for a moment as if he was surprised at 'im speaking to 'im.

"There was on'y one at fust," he ses at last, very slow, "a thin gentleman with a little black moustache, a beautiful white collar, and a silk necktie with a gold pin in it. He was drinking port wine when I went in, and arter looking me up and down, just for a moment, 'e asked me to 'ave one."

"Wot for?" ses Ginger.

"He told me arterwards," ses Sam. "He said as 'ow I was the living image of a cousin of 'is wot 'ad lost his life at sea—saving others. He said at fust he thought I was 'is ghost. There was on'y me and 'im in that bar, and the tears came into his eyes when 'e spoke of 'im."

"But wot about the forchin, Sam?" ses Ginger, arter waiting a bit. "Wot's the ugly cousin got to do with it?"

Sam sat up in bed and looked at 'im. Then 'e snapped his lips tight as if 'e was never going to open 'em agin and laid back on the piller.

"Go on, Sam, old man," ses Peter Russet; "if Ginger had 'arf your looks 'e wouldn't be so bad-tempered. He's got a jealous dispersition. You was just telling us about 'ow the tears came into 'is eyes."

"We 'ad a long talk," ses Sam, arter looking very 'ard at Ginger, "and arter standing me another glass o' port wine 'e began to tell me all about 'is troubles. He 'ad got hard up through 'elping a friend, and 'e didn't know where to turn for money. He went into that little pub with fourpence ha'penny in 'is pocket and went out with five 'undred pounds."

"'Ow?" ses Peter and Ginger, both speaking at the same time.

"While 'e was 'aving a fit of the miserables in there and wondering wot 'e was going to do," ses Sam, in a solemn voice, "the door opened and a gentleman came in. A gentleman wot goes about looking for feller-creechers to do good to. That was 'ow the gentleman as was standing me port wine got 'is five 'undred pounds."

"Did you see it?" ses Ginger, in a nasty voice.

"I see more than that, Ginger," ses Sam, speaking very low; "I see enough money last night to make the three of us gentlemen for life. And Mr. Cooper—that's the gentleman wot 'as it—goes about giving it away

He gave the other gentleman, Mr. Jackson by name, five 'undred pounds for trusting 'im. He got talking to 'im and told 'im that a friend of 'is had left 'im a forchin, and as he was a rich man and didn't want it 'e was giving it away. But on'y to people that deserved it, mind yer. And 'e said that the people 'e could trust was them as trusted others."

"I carn't make 'ead or tail of it," ses Ginger.

"He took a good 'ard look at Mr. Jackson," ses Sam, "and then 'e put a thousand pounds into his 'and and told 'im to go for a walk with it while 'e waited for 'im in the pub. When Mr. Jackson came back he asked 'im whether *he* could trust *'im*, and Mr. Jackson, not 'aving any money, trusted 'im with 'is gold watch and chain, two rings, and a tie-pin. When 'e came back he patted 'im on the back and gave 'im five 'undred pounds. Mr. Jackson said 'e cried like a child."

"'Cos he 'adn't gone off with the thousand pounds, d'ye mean?" ses Ginger, staring.

"While he was telling me this," ses Sam to Peter Russet, "who should come in but Mr. Cooper 'imself—a short, fat gentleman with blue eyes like a innercent child's and one o' the kindest faces I ever see. It done me good to look at 'im. He was a bit stand-offish at fust, but arter a time we was all 'aving drinks together like brothers. And then Mr. Jackson took 'im a bit to one side and whispered to 'im, and I could see plain that 'e was talking about me."

"Cut it short," ses Ginger, fidgeting.

"I ain't talking to you," ses Sam. "Ten minutes arterwards *I* was going for a walk with a thousand pounds in my pocket in bank-notes, *and* the gold cigar-case. I couldn't trust *'im* when I came back as I 'ad on'y got four bob in my pocket, but to-night I'm going to meet 'im agin and trust 'im with all I've got. And Mr. Jackson told me 'e wouldn't be surprised if I got a thousand pounds. He said Mr. Cooper told 'im that he 'ad took a partikler fancy to me."

"I can't make 'ead or tail of it," ses Ginger, "but mark my words, Sam, there's a catch in it somewhere. Nobody 'ud take a fancy to you unless they was going to get something out of it."

Sam didn't take no notice of 'im. He got

There was on y me and 'im in that bar, and the tears came into his eyes when 'e spoke of 'is cousin.

up and dressed 'imself, and when they asked im wot he was going to do till evening he told 'em that was 'is bisness.

PETER RUSSET and Ginger spent the day together, both of 'em wondering, if Sam did get a forchin, whether they couldn't get one the same way. At last, arter they had 'ad a few pints apiece, they made up their minds to hang about till Sam came 'ome and then follow 'im, unbeknownst, to the pub.

They didn't wait for 'im in their room cos they thought 'e might tumble to it, and 'he was so late turning up that they began to think 'e wasn't coming 'ome fust arter all. Then about ha'-past six they see 'im come round the corner and go straight into the 'ouse.

It seemed ages afore he came out agin, and when 'e did they see that he 'ad got 'is best clo'es on and a new cap. They let 'im get a good start, and then follered in a drizzling rain which made the Minories and Whitechapel full of umbrellas that kept getting in between them and Sam, and one nearly put Ginger's eye out. It wasn't till he 'ad turned into a quiet street off the Mile End Road that they felt sure of 'im.

They follered, very careful, and then at last they saw 'im stop at the door of a quiet little pub at the corner of a dark little street. There wasn't a soul about, and, arter stopping a moment to pull 'is cap straight, Sam pushed open the door and stepped inside. Ginger and Peter, arter pinching each other's arms in their excitement, stood in a doorway a little way off and waited.

"I s'pose he's drinking glasses and glasses o' port wine while we're out 'ere in the wet," ses Ginger, arter about ten minutes.

"Why don't they make 'aste?" ses Peter Russet. "I believe there's a catch in it somewhere."

"*H'sh!*" ses Ginger, all of a sudden.

They drew back into the doorway and just poked their 'eads out as they saw the pub door open and a man come out. He stood a moment waving his 'and to Sam, who they could see standing near the bar, and then walked off slow down the road.

"Come on," ses Ginger. "Let's see where he goes."

They follered as quiet as they could, and then all at once they found themselves going quicker and quicker to keep up with 'im. Twice 'e went round corners, and when they got round they found 'e was ever so far in front.

"He's been running," ses Ginger. "Come on! He's going off with Sam's money!"

He started running as 'ard as he could, with Peter just be'ind, and the man in front, wot 'ad begun to run 'imself, left off—and began to walk agin.

"Wot d'ye want?" he ses, as Ginger caught 'old of 'im, and afore Ginger could answer 'im he gave 'im a fearful bang in the face and a kick in the leg that pretty near broke it.

Ginger gave two grunts, one for the smack in the face and the other for the kick, and then 'e sailed in at 'im like a madman, and knocked 'im all over the place. His last punch got 'im fair on the chin, and 'e went down in the gutter like a lamb that 'as been pole-axed, and hit 'is 'ead on the kerb.

"You've killed 'im," ses Peter, staring.

"Good job," ses Ginger, thinking of 'is pore leg. "Come on, let's get Sam's money back."

Peter looked be'ind 'im, and then, seeing there was nobody about, 'elped Ginger to empty the chap's pockets. In less than a minute they 'ad picked 'im as clean as a bone and was hurrying off, Peter 'olding a watch and chain in his 'and and Ginger stuffing things into 'is pockets and saying that it wasn't robbing to rob a thief. Especially a thief wot kicked.

They lost their way for a bit, but Ginger didn't mind. He said the more they got lost the 'arder it would be for anybody to find 'em, but they got 'ome at last and, arter shutting the bedroom door careful, emptied out their pockets on to the bed and stood staring at each other.

"*We've* got the forchin, Peter," ses Ginger. "Count it agin to make sure."

"Twenty-seven pounds fourteen shillings and threepence," ses Peter, "two watches and chains—that one is Sam's——"

"One clasp knife," ses Ginger, "a bit o' lead-pencil, a gold cigar-case made o' something else, and a bundle of imitation bank-notes. That's wot 'e trusted Sam with, I expect, Peter."

"I wonder 'ow much of the twenty-seven pounds is Sam's?" ses Peter Russet.

"I forgot that," ses Ginger. "He ought to pay something for that kick on the leg I got, though."

Peter Russet, wot 'ad seen the leg, nodded. "I wouldn't 'ave 'ad that kick for ten pounds," he ses, in a kind voice. "If you 'ave to lose your leg, Ginger, I wouldn't have 'ad it for fifty."

Ginger 'ad another look at his leg, and then, to prevent losing it, 'e bathed it with a little cold water and put a bit o' butter on it. Arter which they went out as far as the Town of Ramsgate public-'ouse to drink each other's 'ealths.

It took 'em a long time, both of 'em being very pleased with each other, but at last, arter the landlord 'ad been holding the door open for 'em till 'is jaws ached, they went

back 'ome. They both of 'em thought it was earlier than wot it was, so they was quite surprised when they found Sam 'ad got 'ome before them and gone to bed.

"Did—did you get the forchin, Sam?" ses Ginger, going over to the wash-stand and sousing 'is face with cold water.

Sam gave a smile that made 'im look as if he was 'aving a fit.

"No, Ginger," he ses, very soft. "I remembered your advice, old pal."

"Advice?" ses Ginger, staring.

"You said as 'ow there might be a catch in it," ses Sam, "and knowing wot a clever 'ead-piece you've got, Ginger, I thought it over and made up my mind not to trust 'im."

Peter Russet made a noise that an elephant with the hiccups might ha' been proud of, and then Ginger went over and led 'im across to the wash-stand.

"You 'old your noise," he ses, pushing Peter's face into the water. "You didn't lose your money arter all, then?" he ses, turning to Sam.

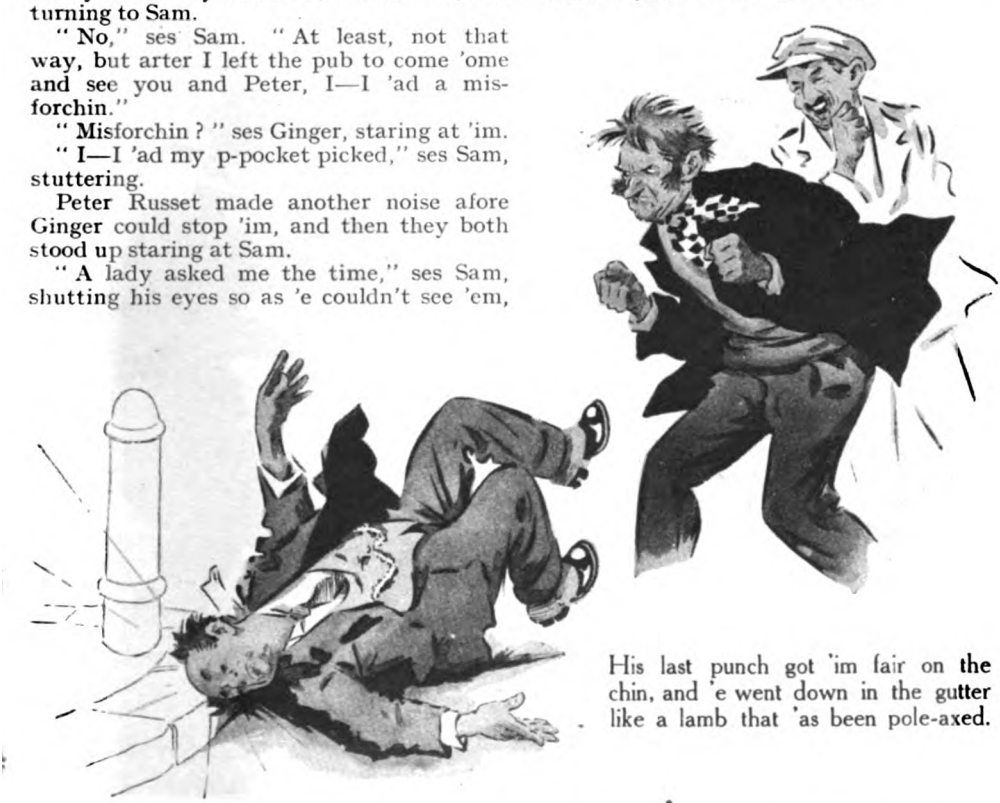
"No," ses Sam. "At least, not that way, but arter I left the pub to come 'ome and see you and Peter, I—I 'ad a misforchin."

"Misforchin?" ses Ginger, staring at 'im.

"I—I 'ad my p-pocket picked," ses Sam, stuttering.

Peter Russet made another noise afore Ginger could stop 'im, and then they both stood up staring at Sam.

"A lady asked me the time," ses Sam, shutting his eyes so as 'e couldn't see 'em,



His last punch got 'im fair on the chin, and 'e went down in the gutter like a lamb that 'as been pole-axed.

"and while I was telling 'er one of 'er pals come up and choked me, and two others helped themselves out o' my pockets."

Ginger looked at Peter--just in time. Then he looked at Sam again.

"'Ow much was it?" he ses.

"Eleven pounds and my watch and chain," ses Sam; "if it wasn't for seven shillings they didn't find, in another pocket, I should be starving. 'Ow long do you think a man could live on seven shillings?"

"Me or you?" ses Ginger, considering.

"Me," ses pore Sam.

"Week or ten days—with care," ses Ginger.

Sam thanked 'im, but not very loud, and arter saying 'e didn't care wot become of 'im and he didn't suppose 'is pals did neither, he punched 'is piller as if it was somebody 'e didn't like and laid down and shut 'is eyes.

He was up fust next morning counting 'is seven shillings over and over agin, and Peter and Ginger purtending not to notice it. They didn't see 'im agin till night time 'cos, when Peter spoke to Ginger about giving 'im his eleven pounds back, Ginger said 'e ought to be made to suffer a little for 'is foolishness fust, to be a lesson to 'im.

"We're saving it up for 'im," he ses. "While we've got it he can't be spending it."

"Or trusting people with it," ses Peter.

Both of 'em felt quite kind to Sam, thinking 'ow good they was going to be to

'im, but Sam 'ardly spoke a word to 'em and was up and out next morning a'most afore they 'ad got their eyes open. Twice they came back to their room that day to see whether he 'ad turned up, and when night-time came and 'e was still missing Peter Russet said as 'ow he was getting uneasy about 'im.

"Wot's 'e doing?" he ses. "He ain't got any money to go to pubs with, and there's nowhere else for 'im to go."

They sat on their beds smoking and drinking some whisky they 'ad brought in with 'em, and Ginger was just helping 'imself to 'is third glass when 'e put the bottle down and sat listening.

"Somebody coming upstairs," he ses.

"He's a long time about it," ses Peter. "He *'as* been sitting in a pub."

Somebody was coming up the stairs so slow it seemed as if 'e would never get to the top, and the banisters was creaking as if they would break. Then they 'eard a shuffling on the landing, and as the door opened they both jumped up and called out at the same time.

"Lor' lumme!" ses Ginger. "'Ave you been run over, Sam?"

Sam looked at 'im for a moment and then 'e gave a stagger and tumbled on to 'is bed.

"Mr. Cooper!" he ses, in a faint voice.

"Wot about 'im?" ses Ginger.

"He done it," ses Sam, "'im and 'is pal I went round to the pub to see if I could fin 'im, thinking 'e might 'ave been took i the other night, and this is wot I got. H said I'd robbed 'im. *Me!* He goes o with my money and then 'arf kills m Wot for? That's wot I want to know."

"It's a mystery," ses Ginger, shaking h 'ead.

"I thought you said you didn't give 'i the money," ses Peter.

Sam didn't answer 'im, and arter drinkin a glass o' whisky Ginger gave 'im he 'eld hi 'ead in his 'ands and said 'e thought 'e wa dying. When they offered to undress 'i he said 'e didn't think it was worth while but they got 'is clo'es off arter a bit and pu 'im into bed.

"Wot did 'e do it *for?*" he ses, arter he ha 'ad two more whiskies. "D'ye think 'e mad? His 'ead was all bandaged up."

"Lor' lumme!" ses Ginger. "'Ave you been run over, Sam?"

Ginger shook his 'ead. "It's a mystery," he ses agin.

He went acrost the room and came back with something tied up in a handkerchief and put it on Sam's bed. Sam looked at it a moment and then 'e picked it up and out tumbled eleven pounds, a watch and chain, and a imitation gold cigar-case.

"He's fainted," ses Peter Russet.

The Greatest Love-Pictures

THE OPINIONS OF WELL-KNOWN ARTISTS AND NOVELISTS.

THE HON. JOHN COLLIER.

THERE are several fine pictures amongst those from which I am asked to make my choice, but since the question is not "Which is the finest picture?" but "Which is the finest love-picture?" the task, I think, becomes simpler and the verdict almost inevitable. There is, in my opinion, only one picture which adequately fits the title "love-picture," and that is Mr. Maurice Greiffenhagen's "An Idyll."

Here Mr. Greiffenhagen portrays very simply the love of a simple peasant youth for a simple peasant girl, and has succeeded where others have often failed, in depicting the man as he passionately clasps the girl to him and kisses her, without making him look ridiculous. He portrays for us the love of the girl, shown in her own feminine way, and in contrast with the man's eager craving for possession we see the girl's happy and willing surrender. The natural attitudes of the figures, the simple story which they tell, and the general colour scheme of the picture combine to produce a very pleasing effect.

Mr. Edwin Abbey's "O Mistress Mine" is a picture which I have always admired. It has very fine colouring, and the figure of the minstrel who is playing the lute on the steps is a happy touch of composition which adds greatly to the effectiveness of the picture. But it does not strike me as being so definitely a love-picture as "An Idyll." One cannot be sure that the woman has any feelings of love for the man, and, if she has, it is love in its earlier stages, love which has not yet developed into the full rapture which we see in Mr. Greiffenhagen's picture.

It is the same with Mr. Harold Speed's "Daphnis and Chloë." It is an attractive picture, though I would personally prefer that Chloë's hair should not have been bobbed. But as a love-picture it is rather unsatisfying because it lacks that strength of emotion which one expects in a portrayal of love. It is, again, a portrayal of a very young love.

Mr. Dicksee has not often painted a finer picture than his "Harmony," but here, too, one is tempted to ask, "Are they really in love?" There is a rapt expression on the young man's face which might be interpreted to mean that he is lost in contemplation of the girl at the organ; but it

might equally well be interpreted as meaning that he is carried away by the beauty of the music she is playing.

"O Mistress Mine," "Daphnis and Chloë," and "Harmony" all appeal to me as being fine pictures, but none of them is so definitely and convincingly a love-picture as to make me transfer my choice from Mr. Greiffenhagen's convincing portrayal of passionate love mutually confessed.

MR. JULIUS OLSSON, R.A.

OF the pictures mentioned there is one which to my mind stands out immeasurably above the others, not only as a work of very high art, but one which displays an entire absence of the mawkish sentimentality shown in most of them. This picture is the "Idyll" of Maurice Greiffenhagen. It is aptly described by its title, and I have looked up in my dictionary the exact meaning of the word "idyll," and it says: "A poem descriptive of everyday life amid natural, often pastoral, and even romantic surroundings." This picture gives one the sensation of what love may be.

MR. F. CADOGAN COWPER, A.R.A.

I SHOULD place Abbey's "O Mistress Mine" first of those works you give in your list. It is a splendid piece of colour, and the painting is filled with romance and the freshness and beauty of the Italian spring.

But Greiffenhagen's "An Idyll" is hard to beat. It is a very beautiful picture of love in Arcadia, and, as a picture of love, perhaps is better than the Abbey, which is not intended to be anything very deep, but to be simply a delightful painted romance of youth and spring in Italy. It has the same lightness and beauty as the verse of Shakespeare's which is illustrated, although, perhaps owing to the fact that the setting and the figures are mediæval Italian, it conveys the spirit of the early Italian poets rather than Shakespeare.

MISS MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL.

AS the finest love-picture—by which I mean the picture which, without necessarily being an exhibition of the most masterly technique, portrays in the truest and most appealing way the emotion of love—I have little hesitation in choosing Mr. Maurice Greiffenhagen's "An Idyll." It is so unmistakably and entirely a love-picture and portrays a mutual love which speaks for itself and needs no story to explain it.

In Lord Leighton's "Cymon and Iphigenia" one feels that Cymon's love is there, but not Iphigenia's, and without a knowledge of their story the picture would lose much of its appeal. Mr. Harold Speed's "Daphnis and Chloë" might be talking of love, but they might almost equally well be discussing the sheep or the weather. Mr. J. W. Waterhouse's "Echo and Narcissus" is again an illustration of a love story which must be known before the picture can have its full significance.

But "An Idyll" needs no explanation. We do not require to know more of the story of the two lovers than the picture tells us. They are young and they are in love, and that is all there is to be told about them.

There is no pose about the figures. They are charmingly natural, alone in a world of their own, with no thought of Mr. Greiffenhagen peeping at them from behind his canvas, and their story, as the artist portrays it for us in rich, warm colours, is the simple story, which never grows old, of the love of a man and a maid.

If I could have a second choice, it would fall on Mr. Edwin Abbey's "O Mistress Mine." It is rich in exquisite colouring, but the figures strike me as too obviously posed, their attitudes as too theatrical. Moreover, I once worked from the model who posed for the man, and to recognize an acquaintance in such a picture cannot but deprive it of some of its romantic appeal.

MRS. BAILLIE REYNOLDS.

IN nothing is the modern neglect of accuracy in thought more clearly demonstrated than in our confused impressions about what we loosely speak of as "love." I have heard two people discussing love, each of them meaning not merely a *different*, but actually an *opposite* thing. One was referring to the strongest, the most selfish, the most ruthless of all bodily appetites; the other had in mind the supernatural virtue which ranks highest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

When I am asked which of the nine pictures here reproduced comes nearest to expressing my opinion, I have no hesitation in preferring Lord Leighton's subject from Boccaccio—Cymon and Iphigenia.

I do not contend that it is technically the best painting. I am old enough to remember

its first time of exhibition, and can recall quite a sharp newspaper controversy about the drawing of Iphigenia's hip. Could the figure of a girl, lying on her side, have quite such a high curve as the artist has given? On this point there may be two opinions, but my concern is with the intention or soul of the picture; namely, the setting forth of the effect, upon the barbarian mind and heart, of the sight of perfect purity and innocence.

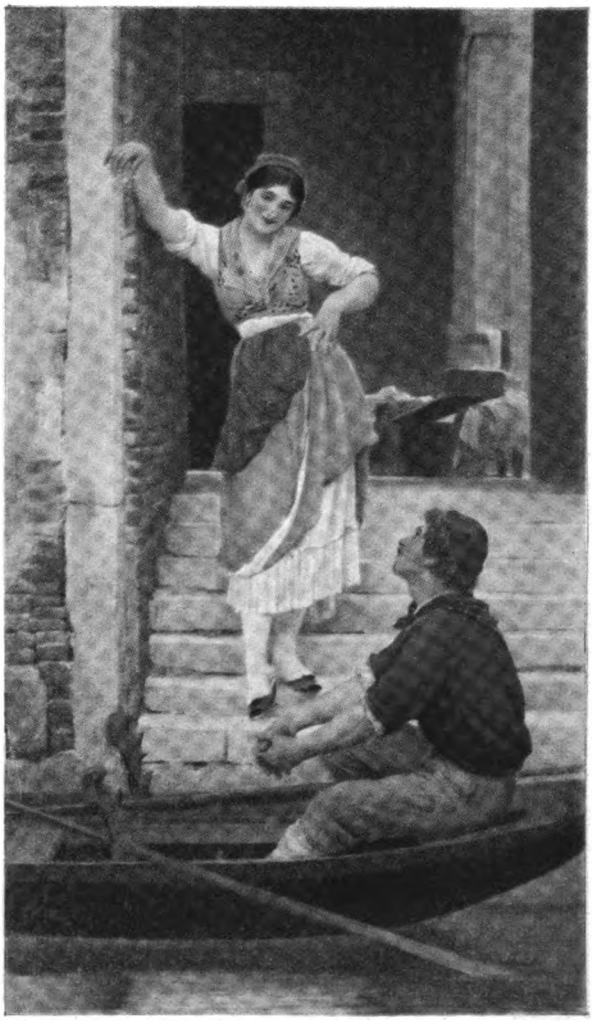
Mr. Greiffenhagen's masterly portrayal of passion is superficial in comparison. These two in his picture are out

> *"Just for the obvious human bliss*
> *To satisfy life's daily thirst with a thing men seldom miss."*

But this is not love.

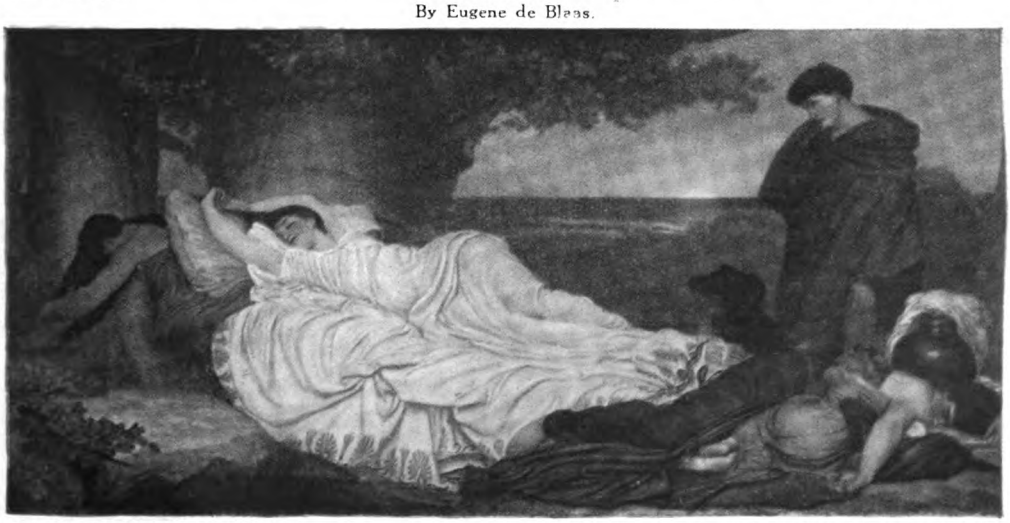
> *"Love's a virtue for heroes, as white as the snow on high hills,*
> *And immortal, as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils."*

Love should be a real definite lifting of the whole being to a higher plane. Cymon the clown saw Iphigenia the princess and he was transformed. Under the influence of this mighty force he became a new creature; for love is the transfiguration of humanity.



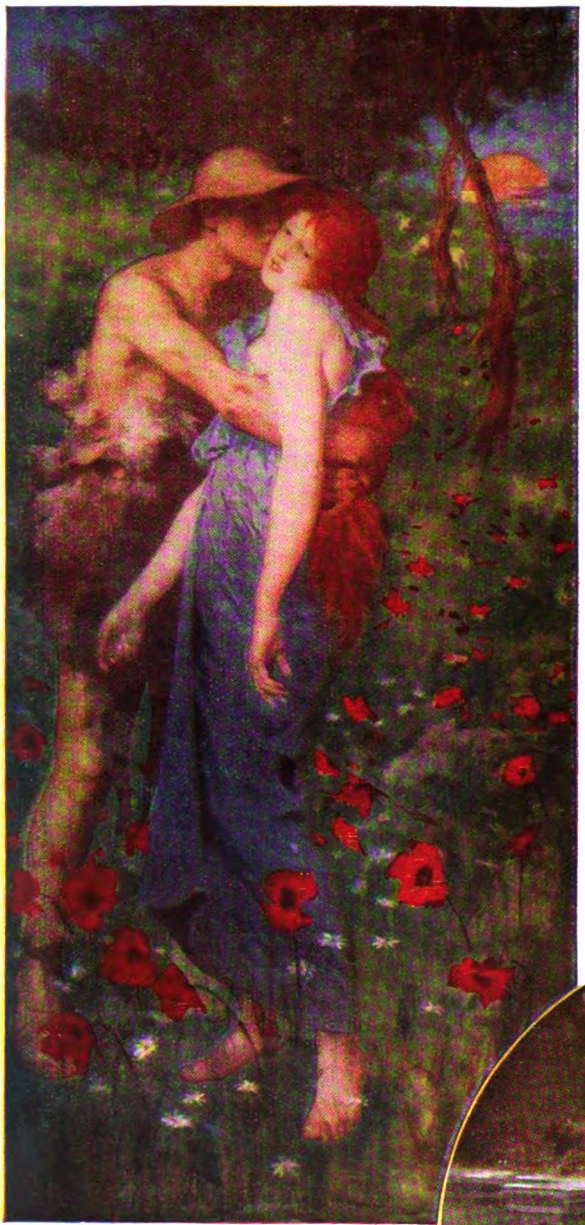
FLIRTATION.
By Eugene de Blaas.

By permission of Messrs. Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd.



CYMON AND IPHIGENIA.
By Lord Leighton, P.R.A.

By permission of the Fine Art Society, Ltd.



AN IDYLL.
By Maurice Greiffenhagen, R.A.

By permission of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU.

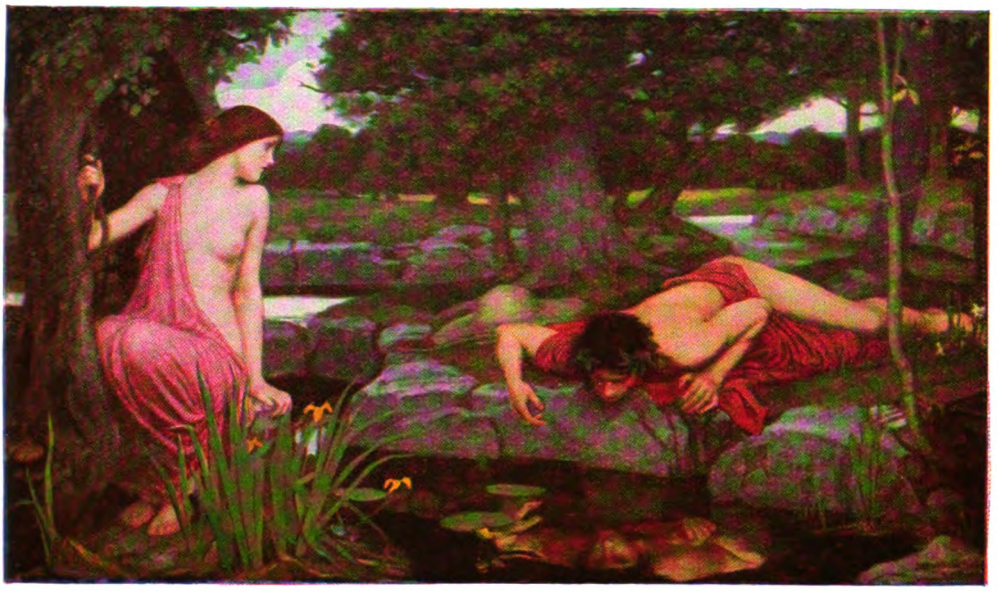
I SUPPOSE it is because I am a storyteller that I like "Dante's Dream" best of the pictures you ask me to choose from. But, of course, it may be merely because Rossetti, both as a painter and as a poet, was one of my earliest passions. Anyway, there is no doubt that I *do* like this picture best: and not least of it do I like the little glimpse of Italian scenery which one spies through the archway on the extreme right of the picture. However, there is no accounting for tastes, and I do not expect either your other judges or your readers to agree with me.

MR. J. D. BERESFORD.

"DANTE'S DREAM" is perhaps the least sentimental of the nine on the list you send me, if we exclude the classical treatment of Lord Leighton and Waterhouse. But that subject which is the chief theme of the novelist is not a good one for the artist. If it is to be treated in the grand manner, there is nothing for it but costume or the nude. Perhaps we live more lightly in the twentieth century, or perhaps modern dress would make any passion appear mere foolishness; but the truth remains that if we want to portray a Dante and a Beatrice, or a Paolo and Francesca, of the new world, we must dress them up. Even Maud Goodman had to go back a hundred years for a dress that would give the touch of sentimentality she was trying for. The painter has to find a symbol,

BY MOONLIGHT ALONE.
By Maynard Brown.

By permission of Messrs. Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd.



ECHO AND NARCISSUS.
By J. W. Waterhouse, R.A.

By permission of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

DAPHNIS AND CHLOË.
By Harold Speed.

By permission of the artist and the Fine Art Publishing Co., Ltd.

"O MISTRESS MINE, WHERE ARE YOU ROAMING?"
By E. A. Abbey, R.A.

By permission of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

because, in this thing above all others, we demand so much camouflage. You will find plenty of real love pictures in the Italian galleries, but most of them are such as would not appeal to the readers of a popular magazine.

DANTE'S DREAM.
By D. G. Rossetti.

By permission of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

MR. JOHN HASSALL, R.I.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Harold Speed's "Daphnis and Chloë" tempts me, by reason of its beautiful colouring, to give it my vote, I think that, as it is a question of choosing the finest love-picture, I must forsake it in favour of Mr. Frank Dicksee's "Harmony."

What chiefly appeals to me in this picture is the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity which the artist has created. The whole effect is that of softness—the soft light of early evening filtering through the stained-glass window, the soft, warm colours; and the position of the girl's hands on the keys of the organ gives one the impression that even the music she is playing is soft.

The picture suggests not a fierce, torrential passion, but a calmly flowing stream of love, and the costumes bespeak a period of less feverish hustle than we live in nowadays, a period when a girl had leisure to play the organ to her lover and he had time to listen, when a man could do his love-making in an unhurried and courtly fashion, and when the all-important question need not be asked at a tennis party or jerked out between a one-step and a fox-trot.

One of the finest points of the picture is, I think, the stained-glass window. There is practically no colour in the lower part, so that there is, as it were, a square halo against which the girl's profile stands out clear-cut; and in the upper part are no vivid colours to distract the eye from the rich colouring of the girl's hair.

It is noteworthy, perhaps, that in six of the pictures the woman has a tinge of red in her hair, and one suspects that, had it not been for the brilliant red of the man's costume, even "O Mistress Mine" would not have escaped it.

HARMONY.
By Frank Dicksee, R.A.

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Thos. Agnew & Sons, owners of the copyright.

CHILDREN ARE FUNNY THINGS-

According to

CHLOË PRESTON,

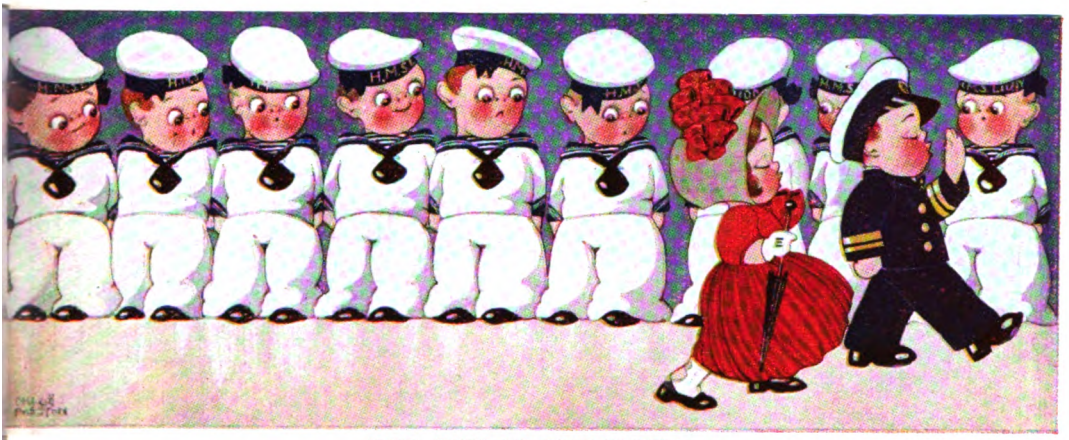
the Popular Caricaturist

THE FLIRT.

By permission of Middleton's, Adelphi.

SCANDAL.

"HAD A ROTTEN TRIP!"



THE EYES OF THE FLEET.

THE CONQUERING HERO.

"MEN!—I'VE NO USE FOR 'EM!"

ENGLAND.

SCOTLAND.

WALES.

IRELAND.

At one instant just a little fluffy-haired kid in her pink dress; the next a blazing mass of flames.

THE PROFESSOR'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

by

"SAPPER"
(H. C. McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

I.

THE PROFESSOR ceased writing for a moment and stared at the window of his study. Outside the rain lashed down in typically Christmas fashion, but it was another sound that had temporarily disturbed his train of thought. At least it had seemed to him that he had heard something, though perhaps it had only been his imagination. Annoying to have one's line of argument broken.

Once more he bent over his desk, reading the last sentence he had written. Then the "J" pen began to travel again across the paper.

"Before we can admit that woman is a rational being in the same sense that the phrase may be applied to man, we must consider, in all its aspects, the fundamental factor of sex."

Again he raised his head: this time there was no mistake. Somebody was tapping at the window. And with a distinct frown on his face the Professor rose and pulled back the curtains, only to give a sudden startled exclamation and fling up the lower sash.

A girl was outside, huddled up against the wall, and a glance was sufficient to show that she was wet to the skin. Her hat resembled a piece of shapeless pulp: the sleeves of her jumper hung like sodden string to her arms.

"Good heavens! my dear child!" stammered the Professor, "whatever are you doing out there?"

"Getting wetter and wetter," she answered. "May I come inside?"

Without waiting for an answer she clambered over the window-sill, producing on the Professor's best carpet the effect of a movable shower-bath.

"It seems to be raining," remarked the Professor, brightly.

"It does," agreed the girl. "In fact, I distinctly felt a drop."

She was crouching over the fire, warming her hands, and it suddenly struck the Professorial eye that she was distinctly pretty. True, she looked sufficiently bedraggled and woebegone at the moment for the fact almost to have escaped his notice, and yet, strangely enough, as he redrew the curtains he was definitely conscious that her appearance was prepossessing.

"I got lost," she announced, "and then I saw the light in your window. I rang the bell, but nothing happened, so I came and tapped. I hope you don't mind?"

"Of course not," he cried. "The worthy Mrs. Timkins, who looks after me, is away for a couple of days. That's why no one answered the bell. I say—you *are* wet!"

The girl broke into a little peal of laughter.

"My dear man, I haven't got a dry rag on my back. So what do you propose to do about it?"

"Do about it?" The Professor started violently. "Er—er—I'm afraid—er——"

"You see," went on the girl, demurely, "I'm so afraid I shall catch cold."

"So am I," agreed the Professor, unhappily.

Assuredly this was the most ghastly complication. Supposing the girl caught pneumonia or pleurisy, or something like that? Common humanity would compel him to keep her in the house, and what on earth should he say to MacEwan, who was coming down to spend a couple of days with him? MacEwan was a very clever man: he liked MacEwan. But the fact remained that MacEwan was at times almost boisterously vulgar. He was under no illusions as to what MacEwan would say on the matter: he could hear him now retailing the story with the most appalling additions of his own to the select and intimate circle to which they both belonged at the Referee Club. The Professor shuddered mentally.

"I suppose Mrs. Timkins hasn't got any-

Copyright, 1924, by H. C. McNeile.

thing I could put on while these dry ? " said the girl at length.

" Good heavens ! " gasped the Professor, " you've never seen Mrs. Timkins. Her bedroom floor had to be specially strengthened to support her weight. Look here "—he swallowed audibly—" supposing I lent you a pair of my—my pyjamas ? "

"Angel man ! " The girl clapped her hands together. " The very thing. Trot along and get them."

The Professor trotted, and she heard him going upstairs.

" He's a positive pet," said the girl to herself, " and I wish I'd never come. It's a shame, and I'll tell the whole bunch so. Why, he can't be more than thirty-five, and I love his freckles."

The door opened and a hand holding pyjamas appeared.

" Here they are," came a stifled voice from the other side. "And for goodness' sake get undr—get your wet things off quickly."

The door closed abruptly, and the girl shook with silent laughter. But she followed his advice. She had just begun to realize that it was very sound, and that she really was drenched to the skin. The jest had taken on a tinge of seriousness. If only she hadn't lost her way in the darkness and the rain between the Hall and the Professor's house it wouldn't have mattered. But she had turned a ten-minute walk into one of twenty-five, and only the thought of the jeers of the rest of the party had prevented her from going back. It was Jack Simpson who had betted her she wouldn't draw the badger.

" He's a woman-hater," he had said. " He writes ghastly books proving that women rank a little below dormice in the scheme of things. He'll probably bark at you, and then send for the police."

" Will he ? " she had answered. "A thousand of my cigarettes, young fellah, that I have dinner with him to-night. Is it a bet ? "

She had heard vaguely of Professor Hubert Morgan as a writer of profound and intensely dull books. Once she had been to a dinner in London where he was expected, but he had sent an excuse at the last moment and failed to turn up. And she had hazily imagined him to be an elderly man with ill-fitting clothes and spectacles. Instead she had discovered a man in the thirties whose clever grey eyes required no artificial help. Shy, certainly, he seemed to be ; but the situation was admittedly a little unconventional.

Deliberately she crossed to his desk and read what he had been writing. A bold, decisive hand, she reflected, and then the sense of the words struck her. She didn't know that it was only one phrase in a long and carefully reasoned argument : if she had, being a woman, she wouldn't have cared.

" We must consider, in all its aspects, the fundamental factor of sex."

And if Professor Hubert Morgan, who in considerable trepidation was sitting in the dining-room wondering what was going to happen next, had seen the look in Hilary Staveley's eyes at that moment, his problem would have been solved. Rain or no rain, he would have fled from the house.

" YOU may come in," said the girl, opening the door. " They're a little big, but that's better than their being too small, isn't it ? "

She was sitting in his easy-chair by the fire smoking a cigarette as he entered, and the conviction that she was pretty grew and increased in strength in the Professor's mind. She was, in fact, quite the prettiest girl he had ever seen in his life. But far from rendering the problem any easier, it only seemed to make it harder.

" My dear young lady," he remarked in his most professor-like voice, " we must really consider what is to be done."

" Do you teach much ? " asked the girl.

He stared at her in surprise.

" Teach ? I—ah—occasionally give lectures."

The girl nodded.

" I know. I recognize the tone of voice. ' Now—ah—my dear young ladies, we will just run over a list of the wives of Henry VIII.' Sausage-face—that was our History master at school—used to talk like that. Tell me, Mr. Man, what do you lecture about ? "

" Er—nothing, I'm afraid, that would interest you much," he answered with a faint smile. " Psycho-analysis, and things like that."

" But you must be most frightfully clever," said the girl in an awed voice. " I wonder who you are ? "

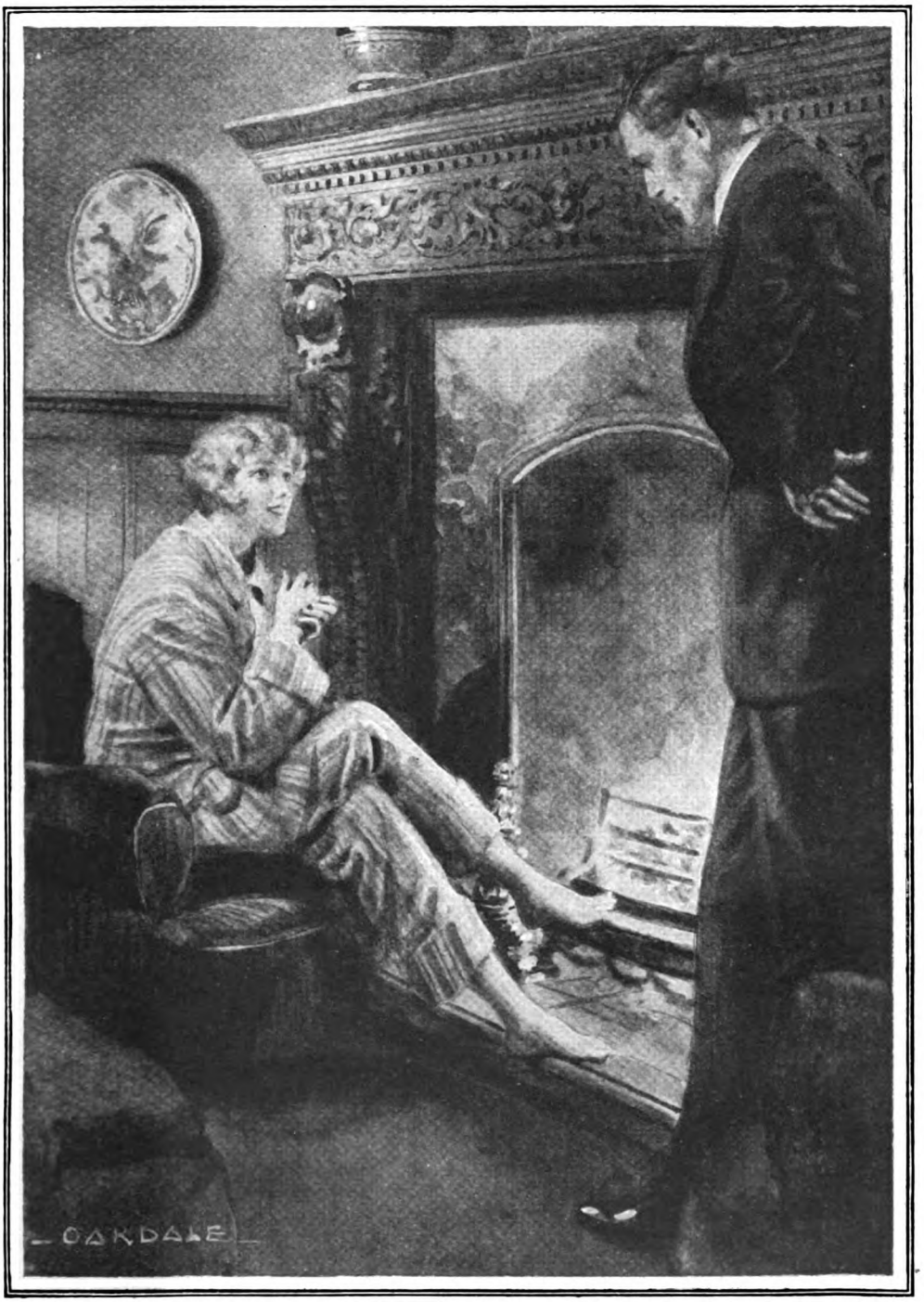
" My name is Morgan—Hubert Morgan."

" Not *the* Hubert Morgan ? "

Feverishly the Professor sought for a firm ground. There must surely be something to which he could anchor himself : some great and true fact—scientifically proven—to which he could cling. What was it he had written himself in " The Claims of Woman : An Analytical Study of Present-Day Conditions " ?

" It must never be lost sight of that woman, being by nature the weaker vessel is forced inexorably to deceit, flattery, and even fraud in order to obtain her ends."

Like a drowning man clutching at a life-belt, he clutched at his knowledge. And then,



"I know it must be inconvenient to you to have me here, interrupting you in your work—but if I may just wait until my clothes are dry——"

rather foolishly, he looked at the girl. With lips a little parted she was leaning forward in her chair staring up at him. Her great blue eyes, shining with admiration, were fixed on his, And, dash it, her ankle was most extraordinarily pretty. The great and true fact—scientifically proven—began to recede.

"But I thought Professor Hubert Morgan was an elderly man and not good-looking," went on the girl a little breathlessly. "This is *too* wonderful."

Somewhere in the Professor's brain a mental life-belt went crash. The only outward and visible sign of this unfortunate accident was a strange stuttering noise that came from the Professor's lips, followed by a most painful and embarrassing sensation in his cheeks. In vain to reflect that the redness was due to the suspension of the action of the local vasomotor nerves: all that mattered was that the Professor blushed like an overgrown schoolboy.

"Er—er——" he stammered. And once again, "Er—er——"

Not a muscle on the girl's face twitched.

"Yes?" she said, sweetly.

"We must really think——" the words poured out in a rapid torrent—"we must really think what to do."

"I leave it absolutely to you," she said, gently. "I know it must be inconvenient to you to have me here, interrupting you in your work—but if I may just wait until my clothes are dry——"

The Professor's local vasomotor nerves failed him again: he had followed her glance to where the clothes were drying.

"It doesn't matter about my work," he said, hurriedly averting his eyes. "It's about your—your reputation."

"But no one need ever know," she answered. "I sha'n't tell anybody that I came and sat here in your pyjamas. Will you?"

"Great heavens! no!" gasped the Professor, fervently.

"Then what does it matter? We'll have a little dinner together in pyjamas: I mean in your pyjamas—that is, my pyjamas—anyway, you know what I mean, and then my clothes will be dry, and I'll go on to the Hall."

"Are you staying there?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Yes. I must have lost my way going there from the—from the station."

"But, my dear child," he cried, "they'll send out search parties if you don't turn up. And this house is right on the road: they're certain to inquire here."

The girl shook her head.

"They won't get anxious yet. I said I mightn't be back till after dinner, and by then my clothes will be dry. Give me another cigarette, will you?

"Are you coming to the Hall for Christmas?" she said, as he sat down again.

"I think Lady Belmont kindly asked me," he replied, guardedly. "But I'm rather busy just now, and I've got a man coming to stay with me who may stop on over Christmas."

"But you *must* come," she cried. "We're going to have the most frightful rag. Do, please. Promise you will. We're all going to dress up—just with things in the house. Nothing elaborate. And there will be a big Christmas-tree after dinner."

"I'm afraid I sha'n't know any of the party," he said, weakly.

"You'll know me, won't you? Of course, we'll have to pretend we haven't met before, but that will make it all the more fun. Or don't you—don't you want to meet me again? I really look quite nice, you know, when I haven't been out in the rain."

"I'm sure you do," agreed the Professor, fervently. "And please don't think that I don't want to meet you again. I should esteem it a great—a great honour to be introduced to you—ah—formally, by Lady Belmont; and to continue, in circumstances a little more conventional, an acquaintanceship so—so strangely and, if I may say so, delightfully begun."

And Hilary Staveley, who would, had she heard such a speech from any other man she knew, undoubtedly have become hysterical from mirth, suddenly felt a queer little lump form in her throat. He was so simple, so utterly unlike anyone she'd ever met before. He was so—she searched for the right word—so trustable. And she felt more and more angry with herself for the trick she had played and was still playing. She had to go through with it now: something told her that, in spite of his almost boyish gaucheness, she would prefer him not to lose his temper. But one thing she would ensure: that no one up at the Hall should split. He must always think that she had come from the station as she had told him.

At half-past seven they dined off cold beef and pickles: at nine o'clock she was still sitting by the fire wondering why a large number of the men of her acquaintance were such fools. For Hubert Morgan—his shyness overcome—had ceased to be the Professor and had proved himself a perfectly delightful companion.

And when at ten o'clock she returned to the Hall—the rain had ceased by then—she was singularly uncommunicative. She was hailed joyously by the assembled party, but she quite refused to be drawn.

" I'll take those cigarettes, young Jack," she remarked. " And I've quite enjoyed myself, thank you very much."

" But what sort of a bloke is he ? " demanded someone.

" Did he put you under a microscope ? "

" Is his room full of dead bodies ? "

" Crammed to the brim," she answered. " I sat on his mother's corpse at dinner. But I'll tell you another thing there is in his room—a thing which none of you bright specimens are ever likely to have. An international football cap."

" What-ho ! " said Jack Simpson as the door closed behind her. " Our little Hilary has clicked. But what beats me is how a fellow who has been capped can write that sort of tripe. He's in the middle of another book now, so somebody told me. Does anyone ever read 'em ? "

II.

" OF course you *must* dress up," said the girl. " Even if it's only burnt cork and a red nose."

Hilary Staveley, looking perfectly charming in a Neapolitan effect, regarded the Professor critically.

" Why didn't you come in pyjamas ? " he asked with a smile.

" Haven't got any," she answered. " And I felt I didn't know you well enough to borrow yours again. I say—did I disturb you dreadfully ? "

" Dreadfully," he said, gravely. " But not at the time."

She looked away, acutely conscious of the message in his eyes.

" Bad thing to get into a groove, you know," she remarked, lightly.

It was annoying ; it was impossible ; it was ridiculous. Only the second time she'd seen him, and yet—she was frightened of herself.

" It makes one so serious," she went on. " And nobody ought to be serious on Christmas Eve—especially after dinner."

" There are exceptions to every rule," he answered.

" Well, this isn't one of them. Now, then—here's a nose. Put it on, please."

" That's your job," he answered.

It was a large red bulbous affair secured by elastic round the head. And as she slipped it on he caught both her wrists in his hands. For a moment she let him hold them : then she drew them away.

" That wasn't playing the game," she remarked, quietly. " It was almost—serious."

" I intended it to be."

And suddenly she began to shake with laughter.

" Go and look at yourself in the glass," she cried. " Oh, man who understands women, don't try to be serious, looking like that."

" Damn the beastly thing ! " exploded the Professor, but when he looked round the girl was gone. From the next room there came shouts of revelry and mirth, but he felt in no mood to join in. If he could have had his way, he would have liked to transport Hilary, with the wave of a wand, back to his own house. Just alone : in his pyjamas again.

During the last week he'd thought it over from every angle. At least, he thought he'd thought it over ; he hadn't really. There was nothing to think over ; it was a blatant, obvious fact. He was in love : just that and nothing more. And he'd passed through all the agonizing phases of a man in that condition. At times he blessed the moment that had made her lose her way : at others, particularly to-night, he almost cursed it. That damned fool Jack Simpson, for instance. Where did he come in ? He seemed so confoundedly possessive. And all the other men, who seemed to regard him as a being apart.

A bunch of them came surging through blowing whistles, and the Professor escaped to the smoking-room. He felt he must be alone to think about Hilary. He'd sat next her at dinner, which had struck him as being a wonderful piece of luck—but it had all been different to the other time. Only natural, as he told himself—but still——

Of course it was only natural. That other time had been a thing apart—a mere accident. And not by word or hint must he regard it as anything but that. To presume on it in any way was out of the question : it wouldn't be playing the game. And as the phrase came into his mind he bit his lip. The very thing she'd said to him when he had imprisoned her wrists. That hadn't been playing the game : he would never have dreamed of doing such a thing had it not been for that other time. Cad unspeakable that he was to have done it ! He must find her and apologize ; tell her that it was just an uncontrollable impulse and that it shouldn't occur again.

He sat down in a deep arm-chair near the fire. His back was to the door, and he hardly noticed the fact that two men had come into the room and were standing by the table helping themselves to drinks. His mind was engrossed in his own problem, and he sat on motionless—so motionless that his host, who was short-sighted, and old General Laidley never saw him in the shadow.

" Damned pretty girl, that Hilary Staveley," remarked the General. " Her

father and I were in Egypt together in '94. He was a wild devil if you like."

"So is the daughter, old man," returned his host with a chuckle. "Do you know what she did the other night? We've got a tame freak who lives about ten minutes from here—you've seen him to-night. One Professor Morgan: writes the most fearful trash. Well, he's a woman-hater or something or other: so our young Hilary bet that youngster Jack Simpson—good boy that, soldier: you ought to do something for him, he's a gunner—however, she bet him a thousand cigarettes she'd not only draw the badger but dine with him. And she pulled it off. Went out from here in the pouring rain at six o'clock and got back at ten."

"How did she do it?"

"She's a bit close as to that," returned the other. "But she did it all right. Of course, he hasn't an inkling that the whole thing was done for a bet. And the result, if I'm any judge of the situation, is that the poor blighter is hooked, gaffed, and landed."

"Don't think I've noticed the fellow," said the soldier. "But surely little Hilary isn't interested in landing a man of that type? I mean, there's nothing in it, is there?"

"Good Lord! no. Personally I think the modern girl wants smacking at times, but, in this case, it serves him darned well right. A bloke who writes his sort of stuff is riding for a fall, and I can't say I feel the slightest sympathy for him when he gets it. Kiss 'em early and kiss 'em often was our motto, Bill—and I guess it answered."

The sound of their voices died away; the room was empty again save for a man with a large red bulbous nose who stared with unseeing eyes at the fire—eyes that looked like a dog's eyes after he's been beaten.

SO that was it—was it? A joke! A bet! And everyone knew how the tame freak had been had! Everybody there that evening was roaring with laughter inwardly: Hilary was roaring with laughter. And he'd thought it was their secret.

A little unsteadily he rose to his feet, and then his jaw set as it had done on that afternoon at Twickenham when he was changing into football rig and the hoarse murmur of the huge crowd came dimly to the dressing-room. There was something analogous between the two events—the two biggest of his life. His right knee had gone in that match, and he knew that never again would he be able to play in international football. And now something else had gone. Never again——

Stiffly he walked to the door. He must find Lady Belmont and make his excuses for going. Pressure of work would do; that's about all they'd expect from a bloke who wrote his sort of stuff.

He passed through the room where the big Christmas-tree was standing. It was a blaze of fairy lights, and two or three children who had sneaked in against all orders were standing admiring it. But he was hardly conscious of their existence, until one of them suddenly cried out: "Oh! what a lovely nose!"

It was a little girl, in a pink filmy dress, and she was smiling up at him. He stopped for a moment and patted her head; she at any rate didn't realize that he was just a tame freak. And at that moment it happened. Two small boys skylarking: a sudden push: a fall.

So easy, and so quick. At one instant just a little fluffy-haired kid in her pink dress; the next, a blazing mass of flames. She hadn't even time to shriek before the tame freak had picked her up and smothered her against his shirt and coat In fact, when she started to cry out of sheer fright the flames were out. And when a terrified nurse, who had been searching everywhere for her lost charge, came running in, all she found were two scared boys and a white-faced man with a big red nose who had little Joan on his knee. She didn't look at him even when she snatched her up; she didn't notice the beads of perspiration pouring down his forehead, as tight-lipped he sat on in his chair. She hardly heard his reassuring remark: "She's all right, only scared," though his next: "Don't scold her, you fool woman; it's your fault," might have made her flare up, but for the sternness in the grey eyes that seemed to sweep away the ridiculous red nose. As it was she only whimpered and left him alone, still tight-lipped and sweating.

The boys had run away, and suddenly an involuntary groan came from the chair. It was the only one; after that there was silence for a few moments till the man who had been sitting in it rose. His hands were behind his back, and he walked quite steadily towards the door. It opened just as he got there to admit Jack Simpson, who stared at him in surprise.

"Hullo!" he cried, "feeling a bit dicky?"

"I'm not feeling frightfully fit," said the other, speaking with a sort of strained stiffness. "I think I'll go home. Would you be good enough to make my excuses to Lady Belmont for me? I don't want to cause an upheaval at the party."

He walked on, swaying a little, and Jack Simpson stared after him with a look of comprehension gradually dawning in his eyes.

" Tight, by Gad ! " he muttered to himself. " The freak is blotto ! Holy smoke ! what a supreme jape ! "

He dashed off to find Hilary and impart the news.

" Tight, dear soul ! " he cried. " Tight as a drum. How well I know the feeling ! The room is rotating ; one's every effort is concentrated on getting through the middle of the door without a cannon. Forehead bedewed with damp ; hands wet and dripping, and tum-tum expostulating vociferously. Thank heavens ! it generally takes me in the legs."

She stared at him, frowning.

" Are you fooling ? " she said, slowly. " Do you really mean he's tight ? "

" Not guard-room and boots off business," he answered. " He's quite quiet. But solitude is indicated. So he's gone home—red nose and all."

" But where is he, Lady Belmont ? " cried a woman behind them. " I want to see him and thank him."

Bella Richley's voice was penetrating, and Hilary swung round.

" Your Professor, Hilary ; your Professor."

" What about him ? "

" My dear ! he's saved little Joan's life The child's frock caught fire—she was playing round the Christmas-tree, and he put it out."

" Good God ! " muttered Jack Simpson under his breath.

" She was blazing, and he caught her up and pressed all the flames out. And she isn't even hurt : only her frock ruined."

" I'm after him at once," cried Jack. " What a priceless fellow ! And I thought —— He's gone home, Lady Belmont ; asked me to apologize and all that."

" Do ; there's a good boy," said his hostess, and turning away with the agitated mother she didn't see a firm young hand laid on Jack Simpson's arm.

" You'll stay where you are, Jack ; I'm going."

There was a look in her eyes that brooked of no argument, and in that instant the youngster knew the truth with blinding certainty. His own dreams were finished ; the tame freak had won. And being a white man he spoke quite steadily.

" Of course, dear. And I apologize for what I said. He didn't want to upset the party."

" Don't tell them where I've gone, Jack."

SHE left him, and ten minutes later she paused by the gate leading to Hubert Morgan's house. A light was burning in his room, but the blind was down and she couldn't see in. For a moment she hesitated —should she tap on the window as she had tapped before, or ring the bell ? And the window won.

She knocked, and after a pause the blind went up.

" May I come in ? " she asked, softly.

For a moment or two he looked at her gravely through the glass. Great heavens ! couldn't she leave him alone just now ? And yet, he couldn't help it ; his heart had started pounding again, so that he almost forgot—the other thing.

" Certainly," he remarked. " The door is open."

" But won't you open the window ? Then I can come in as I did last time."

" I think you'll find the door more convenient," he answered.

With a shrug of her shoulders she turned away, and he heard her coming along the passage to his study. And when the door opened to admit her he was still standing by the window. He was facing into the room with his hands behind his back, and he made no movement towards her.

" I hear you've been doing the young hero stunt," she said, quietly, striving to read what lay behind the steady eyes that faced her. " But why run away ? The mother is dying to fall on your neck."

" Then her life is in no danger," he answered, still standing motionless.

She stared at him with a little puzzled frown.

" What's the matter, Hubert ? You're so different—suddenly."

It was the first time she'd called him by his Christian name, and he winced.

" Need we keep up the jest any longer ? " he said, quietly. " You've won your bet, Miss Staveley : you've hooked, gaffed, and landed the tame freak—and doubtless my absence from the party will enable you to enjoy your triumph more openly than if I were there."

" So you know ? "

The words were hardly more than a whisper. At last she understood.

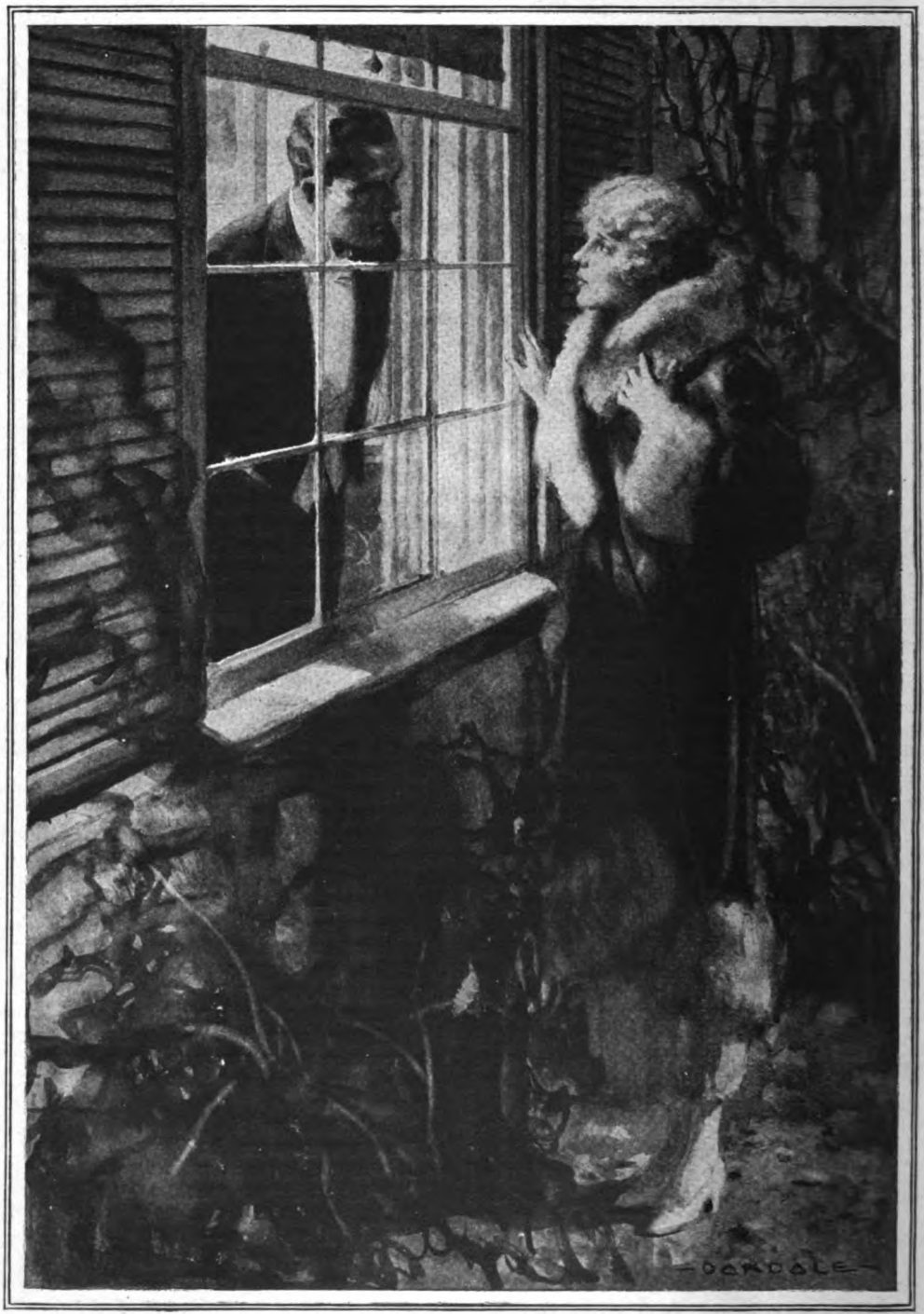
" Is that why you went away ? "

" Oh, no : a trifle of that sort hardly counts. There were—other reasons."

" You call it a trifle, do you ? "

" Isn't it to you ? And since I prefer not to be in the picture any more, my feelings don't matter."

" And if I told you that your feelings matter everything ? If I told you that it did start as a bet, but that almost as soon



She knocked, and after a pause the blind went up.
"May I come in?" she asked.

as I saw you I regretted it bitterly—what would you say?"

"That you are a wonderful actress," he answered, stiffly.

"I deserve that," she said, quietly. "But since you understand women so well you should know we're all actresses."

She went close up to him and put her hands on his shoulders.

"But we don't always act; sometimes we're serious. I'm serious now—as you were earlier this evening. Or is it necessary for me to put on your nose again for you to recapture the mood?"

He stood there without movement, and after a while her hands fell to her sides.

"I see: you won't."

"Don't you think you'd better go?" he said, through tight-set lips.

"Perhaps I had," she agreed. "Evidently you don't believe me. Good-bye: I'm sorry you found it out, and I'm still sorrier that you don't believe my explanation."

She held out her hand, but he made no effort to take it. And after a time she frowned a little angrily.

"Most of the men I know, Mr. Morgan, shake hands, at any rate after a frank apology. I'm beginning to think that you *are* a tame freak—as you put it."

"Good gracious me—what's all this?"

A genial voice behind her made her turn round, and she saw the local doctor bustling in with a little bag in his hand.

"Looking after the invalid and all that? Splendid. Splendid. Now, then, Morgan, let's have a look at them?"

"In one moment, Doctor, Good-night, Miss Staveley."

"Invalid?" stammered the girl. "What do you mean?"

The Doctor looked at her in surprise.

"What's this? What's this? You said you'd burnt your hands, didn't you? At least, that's what I gathered over that infernal telephone."

With a quick movement the girl darted behind his back, and then she turned very white.

"Oh, my God!" she whispered. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Then she pulled herself together.

"I can help you, Doctor: I've done a bit of Red Cross work."

They were a ghastly sight—the tame freak's hands—scorched and burned and blackened. Even the Doctor whistled under his breath when he saw them.

"Good heavens, Morgan!" he said, gravely, "you must have been in agony. Hands, of all things. How on earth did it happen?"

"Saving a kid's life," said the girl, unsteadily. "That's all."

For a moment the Doctor looked at her with shrewd kindly eyes: then he bent over his task. And when a quarter of an hour later he was replacing the things in his bag, the twinkle returned.

"Can I offer you a lift?" he asked her. "I shall be going past the Hall."

"I think I'll just stay and see that the Professor is comfortable," she answered.

"You'll miss the Christmas-tree," said the Professor.

And the Doctor swears that he distinctly heard her say: "Damn the Christmas-tree!"

BUT he was in the hall by then, and anyway he didn't hear any more. And if he had, he'd have heard a most unbiased criticism of the Professor's work.

"How you can have the temerity to write books about women beats me. Do you mean to say that you would have let me go—not knowing about that?"

She pointed to his bandaged hands.

"I didn't want to worry you," he said, feebly.

A wonderful light came into her eyes, and suddenly she was on her knees beside him.

"So I've got you hooked, gaffed, and landed, have I?"

"My dear," he whispered, "oh! my dear, don't play the fool."

"'We must consider in all its aspects,'" she quoted, "'the fundamental factor of sex.' You dear idiot—don't you realize—that I'm hooked, gaffed, and landed, too?"

Her arms were round his neck, and for a time the fact that the blind was up escaped their attention. And it wasn't till she got up to pull it down that a profound remark emerged from Professor Hubert Morgan.

"It occurs to me, on due reflection, Miss Staveley, that I shall have to re-write that last chapter."

NEXT MONTH

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY
By A. CONAN DOYLE.

When I Was Young

A series of articles by celebrities of to-day describing how they viewed life in their early years.

1.
THE RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL

WHEN does one first begin to remember? When do the waving lights and shadows of dawning consciousness cast their print upon the mind of a child? My earliest memories are of Ireland. I can recall scenes and events in Ireland quite well, and even, sometimes dimly, people. Yet I was born on November 30th, 1874, and I left Ireland early in the year 1879. My father had gone to Ireland as secretary to his father, the Duke of Marlborough, appointed Lord Lieutenant by Mr. Disraeli in 1876. We lived in a house called "The Little Lodge," about a stone's throw from the Viceregal. Here I spent nearly three years of childhood. I have clear and vivid impressions of some events. I remember my grandfather, the Viceroy, unveiling the Lord Gough statue in 1878. A great black crowd, scarlet soldiers on horseback, strings pulling away a brown shiny sheet, the old Duke, the formidable grandpapa, talking loudly to the crowd. I recall even a phrase he used: "and with a withering volley he shattered the enemy's line." I quite understood that he was speaking about war and fighting and that a "volley" meant what the black-coated soldiers (Riflemen) used to do with loud bangs so often in the Phœnix Park, where I was taken for my morning walks. This, I think, is my first coherent memory.

At the age of one.

Other events stand out more distinctly. We were to go to a pantomime. There was great excitement about it. The long-looked-for afternoon arrived. We started from the Viceregal and drove to the Castle, where other children were no doubt to be picked up. Inside the Castle was a great square space paved with small oblong stones. It rained. It nearly always rained—just like it does now. People came out of the doors of the Castle, and there seemed to be much stir. Then we were told we could not go to the pantomime because the theatre had been burned down. All that was found of the manager were the keys that had been in his pocket. We were promised as a consolation for not going to the pantomime to go next day and see the ruins of the building. I wanted very much to see the keys, but this request does not seem to have been well received.

In one of these years we paid a visit to Emo Park, the seat of Lord Portarlington, who was explained to me as a sort of uncle. About this place I can give very clear descriptions, though I have never been there since I was four or four and a half. The central point in my memory is a tall white stone tower which we reached after a considerable drive. I was told it had been blown up by Oliver Cromwell. I understood definitely that he had blown up all sorts of

Copyright, 1924, by Winston Churchill.

things, and was therefore a very great man.

My nurse, Mrs. Everest, was nervous about the Fenians. I gathered these were wicked people, and there was no end to what they would do if they had their way. On one occasion when I was out riding on my donkey, we thought we saw a long dark procession of Fenians approaching. I am sure now it must have been the Rifle Brigade out for a route march. But we were all very much alarmed, particularly the donkey, who expressed his anxiety by kicking. I was thrown off and had concussion of the brain. This was my first introduction to Irish politics!

Age seven.

In the Phœnix Park there was a great round clump of trees with a house inside it. In this house there lived a personage styled the Chief Secretary or the Under Secretary, I am not clear which. But, at any rate, from this house there came a man called Mr. Burke. He gave me a drum. I cannot remember what he looked like, but I remember the drum. Two years afterwards, when we were back in England, they told me he had been murdered by the Fenians in this same Phœnix Park we used to walk about in every day. Everyone round me seemed much upset about it, and I thought how lucky it was the Fenians had not got me when I fell off the donkey.

It was at "The Little Lodge" I was first menaced with education. The approach of a sinister figure described as "the governess" was announced. Her arrival was fixed for a certain day. In order to prepare for this day Mrs. Everest produced a book called "Reading Without Tears." It certainly did not justify its title in my case. I was made aware that before the governess arrived I must be able to read without tears. We toiled each day. My nurse pointed with a pen at the different letters. I thought it all very tiresome. Our preparations were by no means completed when the fateful hour struck and the governess was due to arrive. I did what so many oppressed peoples have done in similar circumstances: I took to the woods. I hid in the extensive shrubberies—forests they seemed—which surrounded "The Little Lodge." Hours passed before I was retrieved

We were all very much alarmed—particularly the donkey.

and handed over to "the governess." We continued to toil every day, not only at letters but at words, and also at what was much worse—figures. Letters, after all, only had to be recognized, and when they stood together in a certain way one got to know their pattern and that it meant a certain sound or word which one uttered when pressed sufficiently. But the figures were tied into all sorts of tangles and did things to one another which it was extremely difficult to forecast with complete accuracy. You had to say what they did each time they were tied up together, and the governess apparently attached enormous importance to the answer being exact. If it was not right, it was wrong. It was not any use being "nearly right." In some cases these figures got into debt with one another: you had to borrow one or carry one, and afterwards you had to pay back the one you had borrowed. These complications cast a steadily gathering shadow over my daily life. They took one away from all the interesting things one wanted to do in the nursery or in the garden. They made increasing inroads upon one's leisure. One could hardly get time to do any really important things. They became a general worry and preoccupation. More especially was this true when we descended into a dismal bog called "sums." There appeared to be no limit to these. When one sum was done, there was always another. Just as soon as I managed to tackle a particular class of these afflictions, some other much more variegated type was thrust upon me.

My mother took no part in these impositions, but she gave me to understand that she approved of them, and she sided with the governess almost always. My picture of her in Ireland is in a riding habit fitting like a skin and often beautifully spotted with mud. She and my father hunted continually on their large horses; and sometimes there were great scares because one or the other did not come back for many hours after they were expected.

I revisited "The Little Lodge" when lecturing on the Boer War in Dublin in the winter of 1900. I remembered well that it was a long, low, white building with green shutters and verandas, and that there was a lawn around it about as big as Trafalgar Square and entirely surrounded by forests. I thought it must have been at least a mile from the Viceregal. When I saw it again I was astonished to find that the lawn was only about thirty yards across, that the forests were little more than hedges, and that it only took a minute to ride to it from the Viceregal, where I was staying.

We left Ireland at the end of 1879. Ireland fades in consequence from my recollection. My next foothold of memory is Ventnor. I loved Ventnor. Mrs. Everest had a sister who lived at Ventnor. Her husband had been a prison warder. Both then and in later years he used to take me for long walks over the Downs or through the Landslip. He told me many stories of mutinies in the prisons, and how he had been attacked and injured on several occasions by the convicts. When I first stayed at Ventnor we were fighting a war with the Zulus. There were pictures in the papers of these Zulus. They were black and naked, with spears called "assegais" which they threw very cleverly. I used to practise myself with the stems of bracken, which made splendid "assegais." The Zulus killed a great many of our soldiers, but, judging from the pictures, not nearly so many as our soldiers killed of them. I was very angry with the Zulus, and glad to hear they were being killed; and so was my friend, the old prison warder. After a while it seemed that they were all

With his aunt, Lady Leslie.

Photo. Chancellor.

killed, because this particular war came to an end, and there were no more pictures of Zulus in the papers and nobody worried any more about them.

One day, when we were out on the cliffs near Ventnor, we saw a great splendid ship with all her sails set, passing the shore only a mile or two away. "That is a troopship," they said, "bringing the men back from the war." But it may have been from India, I cannot remember. Then all of a sudden there were black clouds and wind and the first drops of a storm, and we just scrambled home without getting wet through. The next time I went out on those cliffs there was no splendid ship in full sail, but three black masts were pointed out to me, sticking up out of the water in a stark way. She was the *Eurydice*. (We pronounced it in two syllables: "Eury—dice.") She had capsized in this very squall, and gone to the bottom in sight of land with eight hundred soldiers on board. The divers went down to bring up the corpses. I was told, and it made a scar on my mind, that some of the divers had fainted with terror at seeing the fish eating the corpses of the poor soldiers who had been drowned just as they were coming back home after all their hard work and danger in fighting savages. I seem to have seen some of these corpses towed very slowly by boats one sunny day. There were many people on the cliffs to watch, and we all took off our hats in sorrow.

Age twelve.
Photo. Bassano.

Just about this time also there happened the "Tay Bridge Disaster." A whole bridge tumbled down while a train was running on it in a great storm, and all the passengers were drowned. I supposed they could not get out of the carriage windows in time. It would be very hard to open one of those windows where you have to pull a long strap before you can let it down. No wonder they were all drowned. All my world was very angry that the Government should have allowed a bridge like this to tumble down. It seemed to me they had been very careless, and I did not wonder at all that people said they would vote against them for being so lazy and neglectful as to let such a shocking thing happen.

In 1880 we were all thrown out of office by Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Gladstone was a very dangerous man who went about rousing people up, lashing them into fury so that they voted against the Conservatives and turned my grandfather out of his place as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He liked this place much less than that of Lord President of the Council, which he had held in 1867. When he was Lord Lieutenant he had to spend all his money on giving entertainments to the Irish in Dublin; and my grandmother had also got up a great subscription called "The Famine Fund." However, it was borne in upon me that the Irish were a very ungrateful people; they did not say so much as "Thank you" for the entertainments, nor even for "The Famine Fund." The Duke was very glad to come back to England, where he could live in his own home at Blenheim; but he was sorry to sit no longer in the Cabinet with Lord Beaconsfield. Lord Beaconsfield was the great enemy of Mr. Gladstone, and everybody called him "Dizzy." However, this time "Dizzy" had been thoroughly beaten by Mr. Gladstone, so we were all flung out into Opposition and the country began to be ruined very rapidly. Everyone said it was "going to the dogs." And then on top of all this Lord Beaconsfield got very ill. He had a long illness; and as he was also very old, it killed him. I followed his illness from day to day with great anxiety, because everyone said what a loss he would be to his country and how no one else could stop Mr. Gladstone from working his wicked will upon us all. I was always sure Lord Beaconsfield was going to die, and at last the day came when all the people I saw

went about with very sad faces because, as they said, a great and splendid statesman, who loved our country and defied the Russians, had died of a broken heart because of the ingratitude with which he had been treated by the Radicals.

I have already described the dreaded apparition in my world of "the governess." But now a much worse peril began to threaten. I was to go to school. I was now seven years old, and I was what grown-up people in their off-hand way called "a troublesome boy." It appeared that I was to go away from home for many weeks at a stretch in order to do lessons under masters. The term had already begun, but still I should have to stay seven weeks before I could come home for Christmas.

Although all that I had heard about school had made a distinctly disagreeable impression on my mind, an impression, I may add, thoroughly borne out by the actual experience, I was also very excited and agitated by this great change in my life. I thought in spite of the lessons it would be fun living with so many other boys, and that we would make friends together and have great adventures. Also everybody said that "school days were the happiest time in one's life." They [illegible] that in their day, when they were young, schools were very rough: there was bullying, they did not get enough to eat, they had "to break the ice in their pitchers" each morning (a thing I have never seen done before or since). But now it was all changed. School life nowadays was one long treat. All the boys enjoyed it. Some of my cousins who were a little older had been quite sorry, I was told, to come home for the holidays. Cross-examined, the cousins did not confirm this; they only grinned. Anyhow, I was perfectly helpless. Irresistible tides drew me swiftly forward. I was no more consulted about leaving home than I had been about coming into the world.

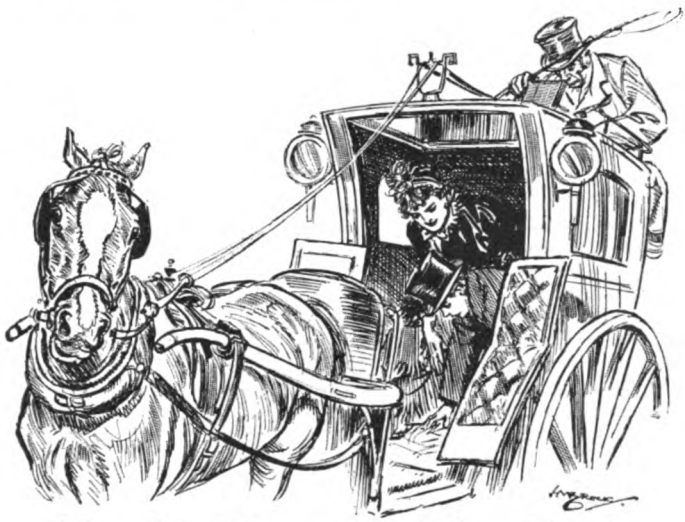
It was very interesting buying all the things one had to have for going to school. No fewer than fourteen pairs of socks were on the list. Mrs. Everest thought this was very extravagant. She said that with care ten pairs would do quite well. Still it was a good thing to have some to spare, as one could then make sure of avoiding the very great dangers inseparable from "sitting in wet feet."

The fateful day arrived. My mother took me to the station in a hansom cab. She gave me three half-crowns, which I dropped on to the floor of the cab, and we had to scramble about in the straw to find them again. We only just caught the train. If we had missed it, it would have been the end of the world. However, we didn't, and the world went on.

The school my parents had selected for my education was one of the most fashionable and expensive in the country. It modelled itself upon Eton, and aimed at being preparatory for that Public School above all others. It was supposed to be the very last thing in schools. Only ten boys in a class; electric light (then a wonder); a swimming pond; spacious football and cricket grounds; two or three school treats, or "expeditions" as they were called, every term; the masters all M.A.'s in gowns and mortar-boards;

Winston Churchill (on right) with his mother and his younger brother, Jack.

a chapel of its own; no hampers allowed; everything provided by the authorities. It was a dark November afternoon when we arrived at this establishment. We had tea with the head master, with whom my mother conversed in the most easy manner. I was preoccupied with the fear of spilling my cup and so making "a bad start." I was also miserable at the idea of being left alone among all these strangers in this great, gaunt, formidable place. After all, I was only seven, and I had been so happy in my nursery with all my toys. I had such wonderful toys: a real steam engine, a magic lantern, and a collection of soldiers already nearly a thousand strong. Now it was to be all lessons. Seven or eight hours of lessons every day except half-holidays, and football or cricket in addi[illegible]



I dropped the half-crowns on to the floor of the cab.

When the last sound of [illegible]'s departing wheels had died away, the head master invited me to hand over any money I had in my possession. I produced my three half-crowns, which were duly entered in a book, and I was told that from time to time there would be a "shop" at the school with all sorts of things which one would like to have, and that I could choose what I liked up to the limit of the seven-and-sixpence. Then we quitted the head-master's parlour and the comfortable private side of the house, and entered the more bleak apartments reserved for the instruction and accommodation of the pupils. I was taken into a form room and told to sit at a desk. All the other boys were out of doors, and I was alone with the form master. He produced a thin, greeny-brown-covered book filled with words in different types of print.

"You have never done any Latin before, have you?" he said.

"No, sir."

"This is a Latin grammar." He opened it at a well-thumbed page. "You must learn this," he said, pointing to a number of words in a frame of lines. "I will come back in half an hour and see what you know."

Behold me, then, on a gloomy evening, with an aching heart, seated in front of the First Declension.

"If you are impertinent you will be punished."

Mensa	a table
Mensa	O table
Mensam	a table
Mensae	of a table
Mensae	to or for a table
Mensā	by, with, or from a table

What on earth did it mean? Where was the sense in it? It seemed absolute rigmarole to me. However, there was one thing I could always do: I could learn by heart. And I thereupon proceeded, as far as my private sorrows would allow, to memorize the acrostic-looking task which had been set me.

In due course the master returned.

"Have you learnt it?" he asked.

"I think I can *say* it, sir," I replied; and I gabbled it off.

He seemed so satisfied with this that I was emboldened to ask a question.

"What does it mean, sir?"

"It means what it says. Mensa, a table. Mensa is a noun of the First Declension. There are five declensions. You have learnt the singular of the First Declension."

"But," I repeated, "what does it mean?"

"Mensa means a table," he answered.

"Then why does mensa also mean O table," I inquired, "and what does O table mean?"

"Mensa, O table, is the vocative case," he replied.

"But why O table?" I persisted, in genuine curiosity.

"O table—you would use that in addressing a table, in invoking a table." And then, seeing he was not carrying me with him, "You would use it in speaking to a table."

"But I never do," I blurted out in honest amazement.

"If you are impertinent you will be punished, and punished, let me tell you, very severely," was his conclusive rejoinder.

Such was my first introduction to the classics, from which, I have been told, many of our cleverest men have derived so much solace and profit.

Lieut. Winston Churchill, 4th Hussars—age 22.

Photo. Ellis & Walery.

The form master's observations about punishment were by no means without their warrant at St. James's School. Flogging with the birch in accordance with the Eton fashion was a great feature in its curriculum. But I am sure no Eton boy, and certainly no Harrow boy of my day, ever received such a cruel flogging as this head master was accustomed to inflict upon the little boys who were in his care and power. They exceeded in severity anything that would be tolerated in any of the reformatories under the Home Office. Two or three times a month the whole school was marshalled in the library, and one or more delinquents were haled off to an adjoining apartment by the two head boys, and there flogged until they bled freely, while the rest sat quaking, listening to their screams. This form of correction was strongly reinforced by frequent religious services of a somewhat High Church character in the chapel. Mrs. Everest was very much against the Pope. If the truth were known, she said, he was behind the Fenians. She was herself Low Church, and her dislike of ornaments and ritual, and generally her extremely unfavourable opinion of the Supreme Pontiff, had prejudiced me strongly against that personage and all religious practices supposed to be associated with him. I therefore did not derive much comfort from the spiritual side of my education at this juncture. On the other hand, I experienced the fullest applications of the secular arm.

How I hated this school, and what a life of anxiety I lived there for nearly two years! I made very little progress at my lessons, and none at all at games. I counted the days and the hours to the end of every term, when I should return home from this hateful servitude and range my soldiers in line of battle on the nursery floor. The greatest pleasure I had in those days was reading. When I was nine and a half my father gave me "Treasure Island," and I remember the delight with which I devoured it. My teachers saw me at once backward and precocious, reading books beyond my years and yet at the bottom of the form. They were offended. They had large resources of compulsion at their disposal. But I was stubborn. Where my reason, imagination, or interest was not engaged, I would not, or I could not, learn. In all

the twelve years I was at school no one ever succeeded in making me write a Latin verse or learn any Greek except the alphabet. I do not at all excuse myself for this foolish neglect of opportunities procured at so much expense by my parents and brought so forcibly to my attention by my preceptors. Perhaps if I had been introduced to the ancients through their history and customs, instead of through their grammar and syntax, I might have had a better record.

I fell into a low state of health at St. James's School, and finally, after a serious illness, my parents took me away. Our family doctor, the celebrated Robson Roose, then practised at Brighton; and as I was now supposed to be very delicate, it was thought desirable that I should be under his constant care. I was accordingly, in 1883, transferred to a school at Brighton kept by two ladies. This was a smaller school than the one I had left. It was also cheaper and less pretentious. But there was an element of kindness and of sympathy which I had found conspicuously lacking in my first experiences. Here I remained for three years; and though I very nearly died from an attack of double pneumonia, I got gradually much stronger in that bracing air and gentle surroundings. At this school I was allowed to learn things which interested me: French, history, lots of poetry by heart, and above all riding and swimming. The impression of those years makes a pleasant picture in my mind, in strong contrast to my earlier schoolday memories.

I had scarcely passed my twelfth birthday when I entered the inhospitable regions of examinations, through which for the next seven years I was destined to journey. These examinations were a great trial to me. The subjects which were dearest to the examiners were almost invariably those I fancied least. I would have liked to have been examined in history, poetry, and writing essays. The examiners, on the other hand, were partial to Latin and mathematics. And their will prevailed. Moreover, the questions which they asked on both these subjects were almost invariably those to which I was unable to suggest a satisfactory answer. I should have liked to be asked to say what I knew. They always tried to ask what I did not know. When I would have willingly displayed my knowledge, they sought to expose my ignorance. This sort of treatment had only one result: I did not do well in examinations.

Mr. Winston Churchill's father, Lord Randolph Churchill.

Photo. Draycott.

This was especially true of my entrance examination to Harrow. The head master, Dr. Welldon, however, took a broad-minded view of my Latin prose; he showed discernment in judging my general ability. He pronounced that I had passed; and I was in due course placed in the third, or lowest, division of the fourth, or bottom, form. The names of the new boys were printed in the school list in alphabetical order; and as my correct name, Spencer-Churchill, began with an "S," I gained no more advantage from the alphabet than from the wider sphere of letters. I was, in fact, only two from the bottom of the whole school; and these two, I regret to say, disappeared almost immediately, through illness or some other cause.

The Harrow custom of calling the roll is different from that of Eton. At Eton the boys stand in a cluster and lift their hats when their names are called. At Harrow they file past a master in the school yard and answer one by one. My position was therefore revealed in its somewhat invidious humility. It was the year 1887. Lord Randolph Churchill had only just resigned his position as Leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he still towered in the forefront of politics. In consequence large numbers of visitors of both sexes used to wait on the school steps in order to see me march by, and I frequently heard the irreverent comment, "Why, he's last of all!"

I continued in this unpretentious situation for nearly a year. It was thought incongruous in these circumstances that I should gain a prize open to the whole school for reciting to the head master twelve hundred lines of Macaulay without making a single mistake. I also succeeded in passing the preliminary examination for the Army while still almost at the bottom of the school. This examination seemed to have called forth a very special effort on my part, for many boys far above me in the school failed in it. I also had a piece of good luck. We knew that among other questions we should be asked to draw from memory a

map of some country or other. The night before, by way of final preparation, I put the names of all the maps in the atlas into a hat and drew out New Zealand. I applied my good memory to the geography of that Dominion. Sure enough, the first item in the paper was : "Draw a map of New Zealand." This was what is called at Monte Carlo an *en plein*, and I ought to have been paid thirty-five times my stake. However, I certainly got paid very high marks for my paper.

I was now embarked on a military career. This orientation was entirely due to my collection of soldiers. I had ultimately nearly fifteen hundred. They were all of one size, all British, and organized as an infantry division with a cavalry brigade. I could only muster eighteen field guns—besides fortress pieces. But all the other services were complete—except one. It is what every army is always short of—transport. My father's old friend, Sir Henry Wolff, admiring my array, noticed this deficiency and provided a fund from which it was to some extent supplied.

The day came when my father himself paid a formal visit of inspection. All the troops were arranged in the correct formation of attack. He spent twenty minutes studying the scene—which was really impressive—with a keen eye and captivating smile. At the end he asked me if I would like to go into the Army. I thought it would be splendid to command an army, so I said "Yes" at once ; and immediately I was taken at my word. For years I thought my father, with his experience and *flair*, had discerned in me the qualities of military genius. But I was told later that he had also come to the conclusion that I was not clever enough to go to the Bar. However that may be, the toy soldiers turned the current of my life. Henceforward all my education was directed to passing into Sandhurst, and afterwards to the technical details of the profession of arms. Anything else I had to pick up myself.

My father himself paid a formal visit of inspection.

The next article will be by Lord Birkenhead, while among others who will contribute to the series are Sir Oliver Lodge, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and other celebrities of the day.

The Custody of the Pumpkin

BY

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

THE pleasant morning sunshine descended like an amber shower-bath on Blandings Castle, that stately home of England which so adorns the county of Shropshire, lighting up with a heartening glow its ivied walls, its rolling parks, its gardens, outhouses, and messuages, and such of its inhabitants as chanced at the moment to be taking the air. It fell on green lawns and wide terraces, on noble trees and bright flower-beds. It fell on the baggy trousers-seat of Angus McAllister, head-gardener to the Earl of Emsworth, as he bent with dour Scottish determination to pluck a coy snail from its reverie beneath the leaf of a lettuce. It fell on the white flannels of the Hon. Freddie Threepwood, Lord Emsworth's second son, hurrying across the water-meadows. It also fell on Lord Emsworth himself, for the proprietor of this fair domain was standing on the turret above the west wing, placidly surveying his possessions through a powerful telescope.

The Earl of Emsworth was a fluffy-minded and amiable old gentleman with a fondness for new toys. Although the main interest of his life was his garden, he was always ready to try a side-line; and the latest of these side-lines was this telescope of his—the outcome of a passion for astronomy which had lasted some two weeks.

For some minutes Lord Emsworth remained gazing with a pleased eye at a cow down in the meadows. It was a fine cow as cows go, but, like so many cows, it lacked sustained dramatic interest; and his lordship, surfeited after awhile by the spectacle of it chewing the cud and staring glassily at nothing, was about to swivel the apparatus round in the hope of picking up something a trifle more sensational, when into the range of his vision there came the Hon. Freddie. White and shining, he tripped along over the turf like a Theocritan shepherd hastening to keep an appointment with a nymph; and for the first time that morning a frown came to mar the serenity of Lord Emsworth's brow. He generally frowned when he saw Freddie, for with the passage of the years that youth had become more and more of a problem to an anxious father.

The Earl of Emsworth, like so many of Britain's aristocracy, had but little use for the younger son. And Freddie Threepwood was a particularly trying younger son. There seemed, in the opinion of his nearest and dearest, to be no way of coping with the boy. If he was allowed to live in London, he piled up debts and got into mischief; and when hauled back home to Blandings, he moped broodingly. It was possibly the fact that his demeanour at this moment was so mysteriously jaunty, his bearing so inexplicably free from the crushed misery with which he usually mooned about the place, that induced Lord Emsworth to keep a telescopic eye on him. Some inner voice whispered to him that Freddie was up to no good and would bear watching.

The inner voice was absolutely correct. Within thirty seconds its case had been proved up to the hilt. Scarcely had his lordship had time to wish, as he invariably wished on seeing his offspring, that Freddie

Copyright, 1924, by P. G. Wodehouse.

had been something entirely different in manners, morals, and appearance, and had been the son of somebody else living a considerable distance away, when out of a small spinney near the end of the meadow there bounded a girl. And Freddie, after a cautious glance over his shoulder, immediately proceeded to fold this female in a warm embrace.

LORD EMSWORTH had seen enough. He tottered away from the telescope, a shattered man. One of his favourite dreams was of some nice, eligible girl, belonging to a good family and possessing a bit of money of her own, coming along some day and taking Freddie off his hands; but that inner voice, more confident now than ever, told him that this was not she. Freddie would not sneak off in this furtive fashion to meet eligible girls, nor could he imagine any eligible girl, in her right senses, rushing into Freddie's arms in that enthusiastic way. No, there was only one explanation. In the cloistral seclusion of Blandings, far from the Metropolis with all its conveniences for that sort of thing, Freddie had managed to get himself entangled. Seething with anguish and fury, Lord Emsworth hurried down the stairs and out on to the terrace. Here he prowled like an elderly leopard waiting for feeding-time, until in due season there was a flicker of white among the trees that flanked the drive and a cheerful whistling announced the culprit's approach.

It was with a sour and hostile eye that Lord Emsworth watched his son draw near. He adjusted his pince-nez, and with their assistance was able to perceive that a fatuous smile of self-satisfaction illumined the young man's face, giving him the appearance of a beaming sheep. In the young man's buttonhole there shone a nosegay of simple meadow-flowers, which, as he walked, he patted from time to time with a loving hand.

"Frederick!" bellowed his lordship.

The villain of the piece halted abruptly. Sunk in a roseate trance, he had not observed his father. But such was the sunniness of his mood that even this encounter could not damp him. He gambolled happily up.

"Hullo, guv'nor!" he carolled. He searched in his mind for a pleasant topic of conversation—always a matter of some little difficulty on these occasions. "Lovely day, what?"

His lordship was not to be diverted into a discussion of the weather. He drew a step nearer, looking like the man who smothered the young princes in the Tower.

"Frederick," he demanded, "who was that girl?"

The Hon. Freddie started convulsively. He appeared to be swallowing with difficulty something large and jagged.

"Girl?" he quavered. "Girl? Girl guv'nor?"

"That girl I saw you kissing ten minutes ago down in the water-meadows."

"Oh!" said the Hon. Freddie. He paused. "Oh, ah!" He paused again. "Oh, ah, yes! I've been meaning to tell you about that, guv'nor."

"You have, have you?"

"All perfectly correct, you know. Oh, yes, indeed! All most absolutely correct-o! Nothing fishy, I mean to say, or anything like that. She's my *fiancée*."

A sharp howl escaped Lord Emsworth, as if one of the bees humming in the lavender-beds had taken time off to sting him in the neck.

"Who is she?" he boomed. "Who is this woman?"

"Her name's Donaldson."

"Who is she?"

"Aggie Donaldson. Aggie's short for Niagara. Her people spent their honeymoon at the Falls, she tells me. She's American and all that. Rummy names they give kids in America," proceeded Freddie, with hollow chattiness. "I mean to say! Niagara! I ask you!"

"Who is she?"

"She's most awfully bright, you know. Full of beans. You'll love her."

"Who is she?"

"And can play the saxophone."

"Who," demanded Lord Emsworth for the sixth time, "is she? And where did you meet her?"

Freddie coughed. The information, he perceived, could no longer be withheld, and he was keenly alive to the fact that it scarcely fell into the class of tidings of great joy.

"Well, as a matter of fact, guv'nor, she's a sort of cousin of Angus McAllister's. She's come over to England for a visit, don't you know, and is staying with the old boy. That's how I happened to run across her."

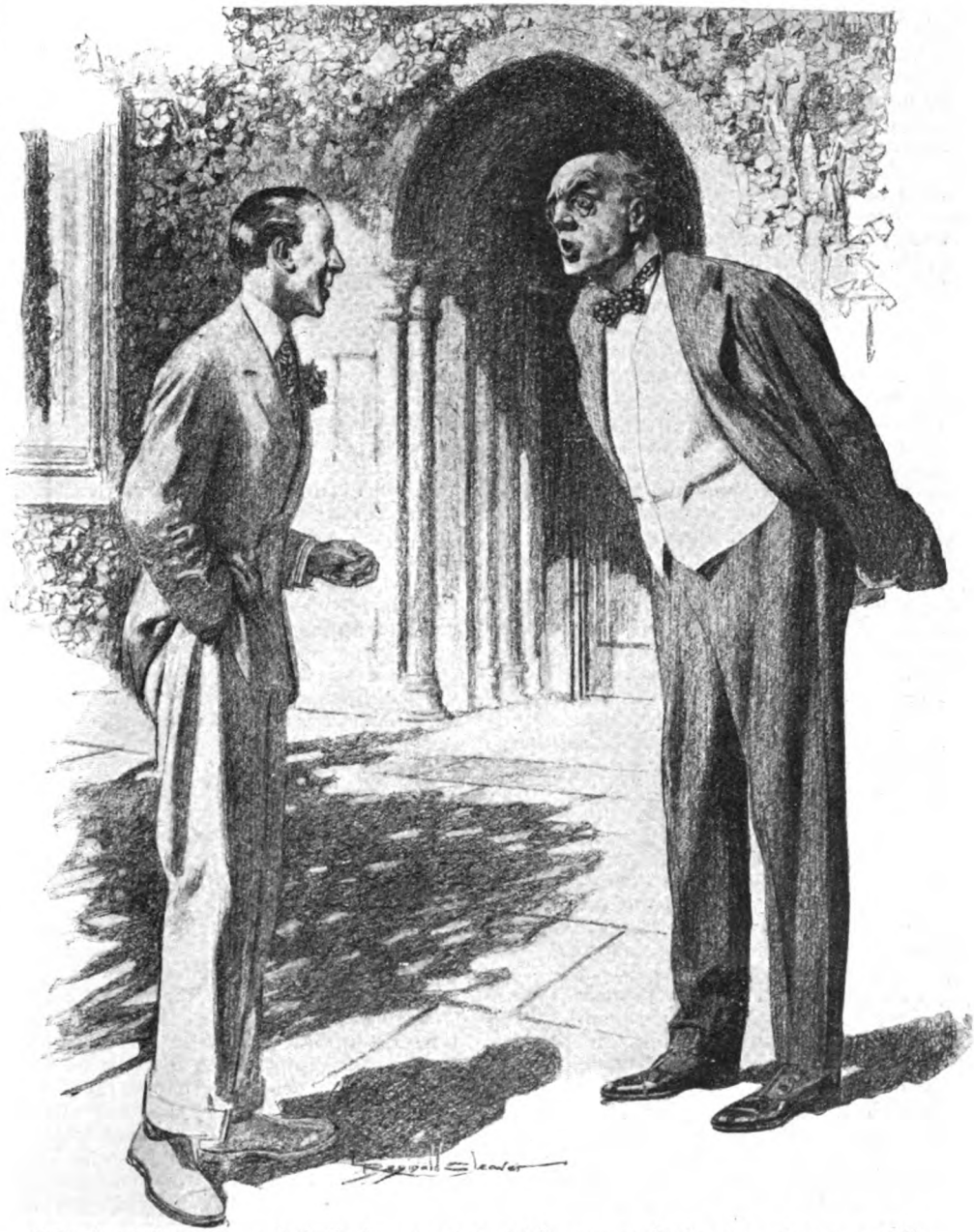
Lord Emsworth's eyes bulged and he gargled faintly. He had had many unpleasant visions of his son's future, but they had never included one of him walking down the aisle with a sort of cousin of his head-gardener.

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, indeed?"

"That's the strength of it, guv'nor."

Lord Emsworth threw his arms up, as if calling on Heaven to witness a good man's persecution, and shot off along the terrace at a rapid trot. Having ranged the grounds for some minutes, he ran his quarry to earth at the entrance to the yew alley.

The head-gardener turned at the sound



"Frederick," he demanded, "who was that girl I saw you kissing ten minutes ago?"

of his footsteps. He was a sturdy man of medium height, with eyebrows that would have fitted better a bigger forehead. These, added to a red and wiry beard, gave him a formidable and uncompromising expression. Honesty Angus McAllister's face had in full measure, and also intelligence; but it was a bit short on sweetness and light.

"McAllister," said his lordship, plunging without preamble into the matter of his discourse. "That girl. You must send her away."

A look of bewilderment clouded such of Mr. McAllister's features as were not concealed behind his beard and eyebrows.

"Gurrul?"

"That girl who is staying with you. She must go!"

"Gae where?"

Lord Emsworth was not in the mood to be finicky about details.

"Anywhere," he said. "I won't have her here a day longer."

"Why?" inquired Mr. McAllister, who liked to thresh these things out.

"Never mind why. You must send her away immediately."

Mr. McAllister mentioned an insuperable objection.

"She's payin' me twa poon' a week," he said, simply.

Lord Emsworth did not grind his teeth, for he was not given to that form of displaying emotion; but he leaped some ten inches into the air and dropped his pince-nez. And, though normally a fair-minded and reasonable man, well aware that modern earls must think twice before pulling the feudal stuff on their *employés*, he took on the forthright truculence of a large landowner of the early Norman period ticking off a serf.

"Listen, McAllister! Listen to me! Either you send that girl away to-day or you can go yourself. I mean it!"

A curious expression came into Angus McAllister's face—always excepting the occupied territories. It was the look of a man who has not forgotten Bannockburn, a man conscious of belonging to the country of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. He made Scotch noises at the back of his throat.

"Y'r lorrudsheep will accept ma notis," he said, with formal dignity.

"I'll pay you a month's wages in lieu of notice and you will leave this afternoon," retorted Lord Emsworth with spirit.

"Mphm!" said Mr. McAllister.

Lord Emsworth left the battlefield with a feeling of pure exhilaration, still in the grip of the animal fury of conflict. No twinge of remorse did he feel at the thought that Angus McAllister had served him faithfully for ten years. Nor did it cross his mind that he might miss McAllister.

But that night, as he sat smoking his after-dinner cigarette, Reason, so violently expelled, came stealing timidly back to her throne, and a cold hand seemed suddenly placed upon his heart.

With Angus McAllister gone, how would the pumpkin fare?

THE importance of this pumpkin in the Earl of Emsworth's life requires, perhaps, a word of explanation. Every ancient family in England has some little gap in its scroll of honour, and that of Lord Emsworth was no exception. For generations back his ancestors had been doing notable deeds: they had sent out from Blandings Castle statesmen and warriors, governors and leaders of the people: but they had not—in the opinion of the present holder of the title—achieved a full hand. However splendid the family record might appear at first sight, the fact remained that no Earl of Emsworth had ever won a first prize for pumpkins at the Shrewsbury Flower and Vegetable Show. For roses, yes. For tulips, true. For spring onions, granted. But not for pumpkins; and Lord Emsworth felt it deeply.

For many a summer past he had been striving indefatigably to remove this blot on the family escutcheon, only to see his hopes go tumbling down. But this year at last victory had seemed in sight, for there had been vouchsafed to Blandings a competitor of such amazing parts that his lordship, who had watched it grow practically from a pip, could not envisage failure. Surely, he told himself as he gazed on its golden roundness, even Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, of Badgwick Hall, winner for three successive years, would never be able to produce anything to challenge this superb vegetable.

And it was this supreme pumpkin whose welfare he feared he had jeopardized by dismissing Angus McAllister. For Angus was its official trainer. He understood the pumpkin. Indeed, in his reserved Scottish way, he even seemed to love it. With Angus gone, what would the harvest be?

SUCH were the meditations of Lord Emsworth as he reviewed the position of affairs. And though, as the days went by, he tried to tell himself that Angus McAllister was not the only man in the world who understood pumpkins, and that he had every confidence, the most complete and unswerving confidence, in Robert Barker, recently Angus's second-in-command, now promoted to the post of head-gardener and custodian of the Blandings Hope, he knew that this was but shallow bravado. When you are a pumpkin-owner with a big winner in your stable, you judge men by hard standards, and every day it became plainer that Robert Barker was only a makeshift. Within a week Lord Emsworth was pining for Angus McAllister.

It might be purely imagination, but to his excited fancy the pumpkin seemed to be pining for Angus too. It appeared to be drooping and losing weight. Lord Emsworth could not rid himself of the horrible idea that it was shrinking. And on the tenth night after McAllister's departure he dreamed a strange dream. He had gone with King George to show his Gracious

Majesty the pumpkin, promising him the treat of a lifetime ; and, when they arrived, there in the corner of the frame was a shrivelled thing the size of a pea. He woke, sweating, with his sovereign's disappointed screams ringing in his ears ; and Pride gave its last quiver and collapsed. To reinstate Angus would be a surrender, but it must be done.

"Beach," he said that morning at breakfast, "do you happen to—er—to have McAllister's address ?"

"Yes, your lordship," replied the butler. "He is in London, residing at number eleven Buxton Crescent."

"Buxton Crescent ? Never heard of it."

"It is, I fancy, your lordship, a boarding-house or some such establishment off the Cromwell Road. McAllister was accustomed to make it his head-quarters whenever he visited the Metropolis on account of its handiness for Kensington Gardens. He liked," said Beach with respectful reproach, for Angus had been a friend of his for nine years, "to be near the flowers, your lordship."

TWO telegrams, passing through it in the course of the next twelve hours, caused some gossip at the post-office of the little town of Market Blandings.

The first ran :—

McAllister,
11, Buxton Crescent,
Cromwell Road,
London.
Return immediately.—Emsworth.

The second :—

Lord Emsworth,
Blandings Castle,
Shropshire.
I will not.—McAllister.

Lord Emsworth had one of those minds capable of accommodating but one thought at a time—if that ; and the possibility that Angus McAllister might decline to return had not occurred to him. It was difficult to adjust himself to this new problem, but he managed it at last. Before nightfall he had made up his mind. Robert Barker, that broken reed, could remain in charge for another day or so, and meanwhile he would go up to London and engage a real head-gardener, the finest head-gardener that money could buy.

IT was the opinion of Dr. Johnson that there is in London all that life can afford. A man, he held, who is tired of London is tired of life itself. Lord Emsworth, had he been aware of this statement, would have contested it warmly. He hated London. He loathed its crowds, its smells, its noises ; its omnibuses, its taxis, and its hard pavements. And, in addition to all its other defects, the miserable town did not seem able to produce a single decent head-gardener. He went from agency to agency, interviewing candidates, and not one of them came within a mile of meeting his requirements. He disliked their faces, he distrusted their references. It was a harsh thing to say of any man, but he was dashed if the best of them was even as good as Robert Barker.

It was, therefore, in a black and soured mood that his lordship, having lunched frugally at the Senior Conservative Club on the third day of his visit, stood on the steps in the sunshine, wondering how on earth he was to get through the afternoon. He had spent the morning rejecting head-gardeners, and the next batch was not due until the morrow. And what—besides rejecting head-gardeners—was there for a man of reasonable tastes to do with his time in this hopeless town ?

And then there came into his mind a remark which Beach the butler had made at the breakfast-table about flowers in Kensington Gardens. He could go to Kensington Gardens and look at the flowers.

He was about to hail a taxi-cab from the rank down the street when there suddenly emerged from the Hotel Magnificent over the way a young man. This young man proceeded to cross the road, and, as he drew near, it seemed to Lord Emsworth that there was about his appearance something oddly familiar. He stared for a long instant before he could believe his eyes, then with a wordless cry bounded down the steps just as the other started to mount them.

"Oh, hullo, guv'nor !" ejaculated the Hon. Freddie, plainly startled.

"What—what are you doing here ?" demanded Lord Emsworth.

He spoke with heat, and justly so. London, as the result of several spirited escapades which still rankled in the mind of a father who had had to foot the bills, was forbidden ground to Freddie.

The young man was plainly not at his ease. He had the air of one who is being pushed towards dangerous machinery in which he is loath to become entangled. He shuffled his feet for a moment, then raised his left shoe and rubbed the back of his right calf with it.

"The fact is, guv'nor——"

"You know you are forbidden to come to London."

"Absolutely, guv'nor, but the fact is——"

"And why anybody but an imbecile

should want to come to London when he could be at Blandings——"

"I know, guv'nor, but the fact is——" Here Freddie, having replaced his wandering foot on the pavement, raised the other, and rubbed the back of his left calf. "I wanted to see you," he said. "Yes. Particularly wanted to see you."

This was not strictly accurate. The last thing in the world which the Hon. Freddie wanted was to see his parent. He had come to the Senior Conservative Club to leave a carefully written note. Having delivered which, it had been his intention to bolt like a rabbit. This unforeseen meeting had upset his plans.

"To see me?" said Lord Emsworth. "Why?"

"Got—er—something to tell you. Bit of news."

"I trust it is of sufficient importance to justify your coming to London against my express wishes."

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes-yes. Oh, rather. It's dashed important. Yes—not to put too fine a point upon it—most dashed important. I say, guv'nor, are you in fairly good form to stand a bit of a shock?"

A ghastly thought rushed into Lord Emsworth's mind. Freddie's mysterious arrival—his strange manner—his odd hesitation and uneasiness—could it mean——? He clutched the young man's arm feverishly.

"Frederick! Speak! Tell me! Have the cats got at it?"

It was a fixed idea of Lord Emsworth, which no argument would have induced him to abandon, that cats had the power to work some dreadful mischief on his pumpkin and were continually lying in wait for the opportunity of doing so; and his behaviour on the occasion when one of the fast sporting set from the stables, wandering into the kitchen-garden and finding him gazing at the Blandings Hope, had rubbed itself sociably against his leg, lingered long in that animal's memory.

Freddie stared.

"Cats? Why? Where? Which? What cats?"

"Frederick! Is anything wrong with the pumpkin?"

In a crass and materialistic world there must inevitably be a scattered few here and there in whom pumpkins touch no chord. The Hon. Freddie Threepwood was one of these. He was accustomed to speak in mockery of all pumpkins, and had even gone so far as to allude to the Hope of Blandings as "Percy." His father's anxiety, therefore, merely caused him to giggle.

"Not that I know of," he said.

"Then what do you mean?" thundered Lord Emsworth, stung by the giggle. "What do you mean, sir, by coming here and alarming me—scaring me out of my wits, by Gad!—with your nonsense about giving me shocks?"

The Hon. Freddie looked carefully at his fermenting parent. His fingers, sliding into his pocket, closed on the note which nestled there. He drew it forth.

"Look here, guv'nor," he said, nervously. "I think the best thing would be for you to read this. Meant to leave it for you with the hall-porter. It's—well, you just cast your eyes over it. Good-bye, guv'nor. Got to see a man."

And, thrusting the note into his father's hand, the Hon. Freddie turned and was gone. Lord Emsworth, perplexed and annoyed, watched him skim up the road and leap into a cab. He seethed impotently. Practically any behaviour on the part of his son Frederick had the power to irritate him, but it was when he was vague and mysterious and incoherent that the young man irritated him most.

He looked at the letter in his hand, turned it over, felt it, and even smelt it. Then—for it had suddenly occurred to him that if he wished to ascertain its contents he had better read it—he tore open the envelope.

The note was brief, but full of good reading matter.

Dear Guv'nor,

Awfully sorry and all that, but couldn't hold out any longer. I've popped up to London in the two-seater and Aggie and I were spliced this morning. There looked like being a bit of a hitch at one time, but Aggie's guv'nor, who has come over from America, managed to wangle it all right by getting a special licence or something of that order. A most capable Johnny. He's coming to see you. He wants to have a good long talk with you about the whole binge. Lush him up hospitably and all that, would you mind, because he's a really sound egg, and you'll like him.

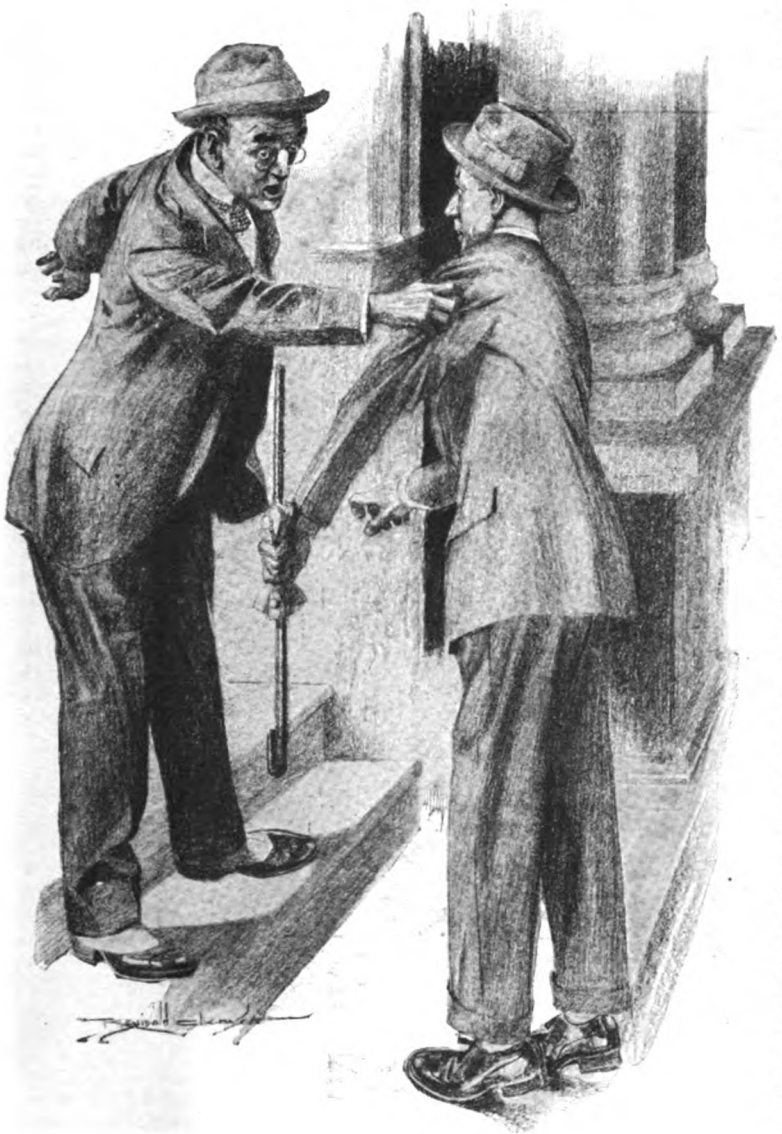
Well, cheerio!

Your affectionate son,

FREDDIE.

P.S.—You won't mind if I freeze on to the two-seater for the nonce, what? It may come in useful for the honeymoon.

The Senior Conservative Club is a solid and massive building, but, as Lord Emsworth raised his eyes dumbly from the perusal of this letter, it seemed to him that it was performing a kind of whirling dance. The whole of the immediate neighbourhood, indeed, appeared to be shimmying in the middle of a thick mist. He was profoundly stirred. It is not too much to say



"Frederick! Speak! Tell me! Have the cats got at it?"

that he was shaken to the core of his being. No father enjoys being flouted and defied by his own son; nor is it reasonable to expect a man to take a cheery view of life who is faced with the prospect of supporting for the remainder of his years a younger son, a younger son's wife, and possible younger grandchildren.

For an appreciable space of time he stood in the middle of the pavement, rooted to the spot. Passers-by bumped into him or grumblingly made *détours* to avoid a collision. Dogs sniffed at his ankles. Seedy-looking individuals tried to arrest his attention in order to speak of their financial affairs. Lord Emsworth heeded none of them. He remained where he was, gaping like a fish, until suddenly his faculties seemed to return to him.

An imperative need for flowers and green trees swept upon Lord Emsworth. The noise of the traffic and the heat of the sun on the stone pavement were afflicting him like a nightmare. He signalled energetically to a passing cab.

"Kensington Gardens," he said, and sank back on the cushioned seat.

SOMETHING dimly resembling peace crept into his lordship's soul as he paid off his cab and entered the cool shade of the gardens. Even from the road he had caught a glimpse of stimulating reds and yellows; and as he ambled up the asphalt path and plunged round the corner the flower-beds burst upon his sight in all their consoling glory.

"Ah!" breathed Lord Emsworth, rapturously, and came to a halt before a glowing carpet of tulips. A man of official aspect, wearing a peaked cap and a uniform, stopped as he heard the exclamation and looked at him with approval and even affection.

"Nice weather we're 'avin'," he observed.

Lord Emsworth did not reply. He had not heard. There is that about a well-set-out bed of flowers which acts on men who love their gardens like a drug, and he was in

a sort of trance. Already he had completely forgotten where he was, and seemed to himself to be back in his paradise of Blandings. He drew a step nearer to the flower-bed, pointing like a setter.

The official-looking man's approval deepened. This man with the peaked cap was the park-keeper, who held the rights of the high, the low, and the middle justice over that section of the gardens. He, too, loved these flower-beds, and he seemed to see in Lord Emsworth a kindred soul. The general public was too apt to pass by, engrossed in its own affairs, and this often wounded the park-keeper. In Lord Emsworth he thought that he recognized one of the right sort.

"Nice——" he began.

He broke off with a sharp cry. If he had not seen it with his own eyes, he would not have believed it. But, alas, there was no possibility of a mistake. With a ghastly shock he realized that he had been deceived in this attractive stranger. Decently, if untidily, dressed; clean; respectable to the outward eye; the stranger was in reality a dangerous criminal, the blackest type of evil-doer on the park-keeper's index. He was a Kensington Gardens flower-picker.

For, even as he uttered the word "Nice," the man had stepped lightly over the low railing, had shambled across the strip of turf, and before you could say "knife" was busy on his dark work. In the brief instant in which the park-keeper's vocal chords refused to obey him, he was two tulips ahead of the game and reaching out to scoop in a third.

"Hi!!!" roared the park-keeper, suddenly finding speech. "'I there!!!"

Lord Emsworth turned with a start.

When a crowd sees a man in a badly-fitting tweed suit getting put through it for pinching flowers in the Park, and the man says he is an earl, it laughs. This crowd laughed.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured, reproachfully.

He was in full possession of his senses now, such as they were, and understood the enormity of his conduct. He shuffled back on to the asphalt, contrite.

"My dear fellow——" he began, remorsefully.

The park-keeper began to speak rapidly and at length. From time to time Lord Emsworth moved his lips and made deprecating gestures, but he could not stem the flood. Louder and more rhetorical grew the park-keeper and denser and more interested the rapidly assembling crowd of spectators. And then through the stream of words another voice spoke.

"Wot's all this?"

The Force had materialized in the shape of a large, solid constable.

The park-keeper seemed to understand that he had been superseded. He still spoke, but no longer like a father rebuking an erring son. His attitude now was more that of an elder brother appealing for justice against a delinquent junior. In a moving passage he stated his case.

"'E Says," observed the constable, judicially, speaking slowly and in capitals, as if addressing an untutored foreigner, "'E Says You Was Pickin' The Flowers."

"I saw 'im. I was standin' as close as I am to you."

"'E Saw You," interpreted the constable. "'E Was Standing At Your Side."

Lord Emsworth was feeling weak and bewildered. Without a thought of annoying or doing harm to anybody, he seemed to have unchained the fearful passions of a French Revolution; and there came over him a sense of how unjust it was that this sort of thing should be happening to him, of all people—a man already staggering beneath the troubles of a Job.

"I'll 'ave to ask you for your name and address," said the constable, more briskly. A stubby pencil popped for an instant into his stern mouth and hovered, well and truly moistened, over the virgin page of his notebook—that dreadful notebook before which taxi-drivers shrink and hardened bus-conductors quail.

"I—I—why, my dear fellow—I mean, officer—I am the Earl of Emsworth."

Much has been written of the psychology of crowds, designed to show how extraordinary and inexplicable it is, but most

of such writing is exaggeration. A crowd generally behaves in a perfectly natural and intelligible fashion. When, for instance, it sees a man in a badly-fitting tweed suit and a hat he ought to be ashamed of getting put through it for pinching flowers in the Park, and the man says he is an earl, it laughs. This crowd laughed.

"Ho?" The constable did not stoop to join in the merriment of the rabble, but his lip twitched sardonically. "Have you a card, your lordship?"

Nobody intimate with Lord Emsworth would have asked such a foolish question. His card-case was the thing he always lost second when visiting London—immediately after losing his umbrella.

"I—er—I'm afraid——"

"R!" said the constable. And the crowd uttered another happy, hyena-like laugh, so intensely galling that his lordship raised his bowed head and found enough spirit to cast an indignant glance. And, as he did so, the hunted look faded from his eyes.

"McAllister!" he cried.

Two new arrivals had just joined the throng, and, being of rugged and nobbly physique, had already shoved themselves through to the ringside seats. One was a tall, handsome, smooth-faced gentleman of authoritative appearance, who, if he had not worn rimless glasses, would have looked like a Roman emperor. The other was a shorter, sturdier man with a bristly red beard.

"McAllister!" moaned his lordship, piteously. "McAllister, my dear fellow, do please tell this man who I am."

After what had passed between himself and his late employer, a lesser man than Angus McAllister might have seen in Lord Emsworth's predicament merely a judgment. A man of little magnanimity would have felt that here was where he got a bit of his own back.

Not so this splendid Glaswegian.

"Aye," he said. "Yon's Lorrud Emsworruth."

"Who are you?" inquired the constable, searchingly.

"I used to be head-gardener at the cassel."

"Exactly," bleated Lord Emsworth. "Precisely. My head-gardener."

The constable was shaken. Lord Emsworth might not look like an earl, but there was no getting away from the fact that Angus McAllister was supremely head-gardeneresque. A staunch admirer of the aristocracy, the constable perceived that zeal had caused him to make a bit of a bloomer. Yes, he had dropped a brick.

In this crisis, however, he comported himself with a masterly tact. He scowled blackly upon the interested throng.

"Pass along there, please. Pass along," he commanded, austerely. "Ought to know better than block up a public thoroughfare like this. Pass along!"

He moved off, shepherding the crowd before him. The Roman emperor with the rimless glasses advanced upon Lord Emsworth, extending a large hand.

"Pleased to meet you at last," he said. "My name is Donaldson, Lord Emsworth."

For a moment the name conveyed nothing to his lordship. Then its significance hit him, and he drew himself up with hauteur.

"You'll excuse us, Angus," said Mr. Donaldson. "High time you and I had a little chat, Lord Emsworth."

LORD EMSWORTH was about to speak, when he caught the other's eye. It was a strong, keen, level grey eye, with a curious forcefulness about it that made him feel strangely inferior. There is every reason to suppose that Mr. Donaldson had subscribed for years to those personality courses advertised in the magazines which guarantee to impart to the pupil who takes ten correspondence lessons the ability to look the boss in the eye and make him wilt. Mr. Donaldson looked Lord Emsworth in the eye, and Lord Emsworth wilted.

"How do you do?" he said, weakly.

"Now listen, Lord Emsworth," proceeded Mr. Donaldson. "No sense in having hard feelings between members of a family. I take it you've heard by this that your boy and my girl have gone ahead and fixed it up? Personally, I'm delighted. That boy is a fine young fellow."

Lord Emsworth blinked.

"You are speaking of my son Frederick?" he said, incredulously.

"Of your son Frederick. Now, at the moment, no doubt, you are feeling a trifle sore. I don't blame you. You have every right to be sorer than a gumboil. But you must remember—young blood, eh? It will, I am convinced, be a lasting grief to that splendid young man——"

"You are still speaking of my son Frederick?"

"Of Frederick, yes. It will, I say, be a lasting grief to him if he feels he has incurred your resentment. You must forgive him, Lord Emsworth. He must have your support."

"I suppose he'll have to have it, dash it!" said his lordship, unhappily. "Can't let the boy starve."

Mr. Donaldson's hand swept round in a wide, grand gesture.

"Don't you worry about that. I'll look after that end of it. I am not a rich man——"

"Ah!" said his lordship, resignedly. A faint hope, inspired by the largeness of the other's manner, had been flickering in his bosom.

"I doubt," continued Mr. Donaldson, frankly, "if, all told, I have as much as ten million dollars in the world."

Lord Emsworth swayed like a sapling in the breeze.

"Ten million? Ten million? Did you say you had ten million dollars?"

"Between nine and ten, I suppose. Not more. But you must bear in mind that the business is growing all the time. I am Donaldson's Dog-Biscuits."

"Donaldson's Dog-Biscuits! Indeed! Really! Fancy that!"

"You have heard of them?" asked Mr. Donaldson, eagerly.

"Never," said Lord Emsworth, cordially.

"Oh! Well, that's who I am. And, with your approval, I intend to send Frederick over to Long Island City to start learning the business. I have no doubt that he will in time prove a most valuable asset to the firm."

Lord Emsworth could conceive of no way in which Freddie could be of value to a dog-biscuit firm, except possibly as a taster; but he refrained from damping the other's enthusiasm by saying so.

"He seems full of keenness. But he must feel that he has your moral support, Lord Emsworth—his father's moral support."

"Yes, yes, yes!" said Lord Emsworth, heartily. A feeling of positive adoration for Mr. Donaldson was thrilling him. The getting rid of Freddie, which he himself had been unable to achieve in twenty-six years, this godlike dog-biscuit manufacturer had accomplished in less than a week. "Oh, yes, yes, yes! Yes, indeed! Most decidedly!"

"They sail on Wednesday."

"Splendid!"

"Early in the morning."

"Capital!"

"I may give them a friendly message from you?"

"Certainly! Certainly, certainly, certainly! Inform Frederick that he has my best wishes."

"I will."

"Mention that I shall watch his future progress with considerable interest."

"Exactly."

"Say that I hope he will work hard and make a name for himself."

"Just so."

"And," concluded Lord Emsworth, speaking with a fatherly earnestness well in keeping with this solemn moment, "tell him—er—not to hurry home."

He pressed Mr. Donaldson's hand with feelings too deep for further speech. Then he galloped swiftly to where Angus McAllister stood brooding over the tulip-bed.

"McAllister!"

The other's beard waggled grimly. He looked at his late employer with cold eyes.

"McAllister," faltered Lord Emsworth, humbly, "I wish—I wonder—— What I want to say is, have you accepted another situation yet?"

"I am conseederin' twa."

"Come back to me!" pleaded his lordship, his voice breaking. "Robert Barker is worse than useless. Come back to me!"

Angus McAllister gazed woodenly at the tulips.

"A' weel——" he said at length.

"You will?" cried Lord Emsworth, joyfully. "Splendid! Capital! Excellent!"

"A' didna say I wud."

"I thought you said 'I will,'" said his lordship, dashed.

"I didna say 'A' weel,' I said 'A' weel,'" said Mr. McAllister, stiffly. "Meanin' mebbe I might, mebbe not."

Lord Emsworth laid a trembling hand upon his arm.

"McAllister, I will raise your salary."

The beard twitched.

"Dash it, I'll double it!"

The eyebrows flickered.

"McAllister—Angus," said Lord Emsworth, in a low voice. "Come back! The pumpkin needs you."

IN an age of rush and hurry like that of to-day, an age in which there are innumerable calls on the leisure-time of everyone, it is possible that here and there throughout the ranks of the public who have read this chronicle there may be one or two who for various reasons found themselves unable to attend the annual Flower and Vegetable Show at Shrewsbury. Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, of Badgwick Hall, was there, of course, but it would not have escaped the notice of a close observer that his mien lacked something of the haughty arrogance which had characterized it in other years. From time to time, as he paced the tent devoted to the exhibition of vegetables, he might have been seen to bite his lip, and his eye had something of that brooding look which Napoleon's must have worn after Waterloo.

But there is the right stuff in Sir Gregory. He is a gentleman and a sportsman. In the Parsloe-Parsloe tradition there is nothing small or mean. Half-way down the tent he stopped, and with a quick, manly gesture thrust out his hand.

"Congratulate you, Emsworth," he said, huskily.

Lord Emsworth looked up with a start. He had been deep in his thoughts.

"Thanks, my dear fellow. Thanks. Thanks. Thank you very much." He hesitated. "Er—can't both win, if you understand me."

Sir Gregory puzzled it out.

"No," he said. "No. See what you mean. Can't both win." He nodded and walked on, with who knows what vultures gnawing at his broad bosom. And Lord Emsworth—with Angus McAllister, who had been a silent witness of the scene, at his side—turned once more to stare reverently at that which lay on the strawy bottom of one of the largest packing-cases ever seen in Shrewsbury town.

"Come back to me!" pleaded his lordship, his voice breaking. "Robert Barker is worse than useless. Come back to me!"

Inside it something vast and golden beamed up at him.

A card had been attached to the exterior of the packing-case. It bore the simple legend:—

PUMPKINS. FIRST PRIZE.

Fair Exchange

KATHERINE NEWLIN BURT

ILLUSTRATED BY E. F. SHERIE

AFTER consultation with her calendar, Mrs. St. Ives Shaw decided that, since there was an hour or more before a luncheon engagement, she would take her broken bracelet to Grinsby's for repairs. She rang for her maid, ordered her street clothes, and, while she waited, took out her jewel-case and examined the damaged article. Whatever faults "Ivy" might have, she told herself, he was not an ungenerous husband. There had been the diamond bracelet last Christmas and the string of pearls and sapphires on their wedding anniversary—a beautiful ornament, interesting, too, because of its skilful trick catch by which it could be transferred from neck to wrist ornament by an instant's manipulation. With its azure flame and tender shimmer it was especially becoming to a white-skinned, blue-eyed woman like herself. She stood up in her lace negligée before her mirror and studied the effect of the stones. A dancing partner, her latest jazz affinity, had said, "You look like a little white swan." That was a pretty compliment: it showed imagination. Most dancing partners were clever only with their feet. Yes, with those jewels against her long white throat, she did look like a swan; it was the smallness of her head, perhaps, or the shape of her eyes—the way she carried herself.

The maid returned.

"Madam, a lady wants to see you. She says it is urgent. The name is Mrs. John Harvey."

Caroline Shaw opened her eyes comically at their reflection in the mirror.

"Mercy on us, Mary! What a queer time for a stranger to insist on seeing me! All right, let her come up here. She'll have to be informal if she comes at eleven o'clock on the morning after a ball."

She laughed at a small malicious fancy concerning the coincidence of her meditations about Jack and this odd intrusion of his wife, and stood thoughtfully pulling the sapphire chain through her slim hands. Only last night, when she had shown Jack Harvey the secret of the catch, she had let him refasten these sapphires at her throat. He had touched her neck—he had touched it not only with his finger-tips. She lifted her own finger now and delicately brushed the spot, watching her own eyes soften a little as she did so. The dressing-room, old rose and grey—draperies, woodwork, and deep silky rugs—threw faint becoming tints upon her. She was by no means unconscious of her mother-of-pearl effectiveness in this setting. She liked herself in negligée: trailing laces, delicate revealment, tiny brocade mules. She was small and slender. Tall women, she believed, were at a disadvantage in moments of deshabille. She wondered if Mrs. Harvey were a tall woman. She put her jewels down carelessly behind her on the dressing-table and moved forward as Mary opened the door. The catch of the sapphire chain caught in her lace, was carried forward, and slid noiselessly into the thick depths of a white fur rug.

"Mrs. Harvey, madam," Mary announced, and went out, closing the dressing-room door.

A SMALL woman came quickly forward across the rug. The morning light from the long windows on either side of the dressing-table revealed every little line and thread of her—the pale face, faintly distorted by some keen anxiety, the forlorn dress and furs, the little unfashionable shoes, the felt hat, ante-dated, shapeless; the soft, unelaborated hair, the complexion unshaded by powder and unbrightened by rouge. Caroline told herself that this could not be Jack Harvey's wife. The girl was pretty, certainly, perhaps very pretty, but she would be entirely dependent for any real effectiveness upon grooming, dressing, touching-up. How stupid a woman must be to let herself fall into such dingy disability! If Jack was really married to this poor little creature, she didn't wonder at his present aberration. "A little white swan"—he couldn't pay this wife such compliments.

"It was very sweet of you to call," said Caroline. "Won't you forgive me for receiving you up here—like this? I'm not

usually dressed and in my right mind much before twelve o'clock. But Mary said you were urgent."

Caroline sat down and the visitor placed herself opposite on a small stiff gilded chair. She was evidently using all her courage to go through with a painful undertaking. A little pulse beat in her delicate throat.

"I think it was very good of you to see me at all. I have a feeling, Mrs. Shaw, that you are a sympathetic woman, understanding, generous."

Said Caroline, doubtfully, "Thank you, Mrs. Harvey. Is there anything I can do for you?"

THE girl stroked her absurd old muff and looked down at it. There was a hole in her glove, the pink tip of her finger showed through. Caroline wondered how old she was—young, certainly, younger even than Jack. But she couldn't be Jack Harvey's wife—not *her* Jack Harvey's.

"I have never met you, Mrs. Shaw, of course, though you have been kind enough to send me cards to your teas. But Jack, my husband——"

Caroline began to talk rather rapidly, as though by a barrage of pretty accents she could cover a slight confusion caused by perfectly inaudible thoughts. "But why haven't I met you? How stupid of Jack not to bring you to my teas! I had an idea you were away, perhaps, or out of health. You have been, haven't you? I think I remember Jack's saying so. I have no memory, and Jack is careless. But he's a great dear, isn't he?"

The face, unsoftened by powder and unbrightened by paint, had for an instant no need of either. It lighted itself from within quite beautifully. The little distortion of anxiety and resolution left it. The lips grew soft and moved to an exquisite, almost maternal, smile. This faded away, however, as she looked fixedly at Caroline.

"Yes, he is—rather—a dear. I suppose it would make you happy—please you, that is—to hear another woman say that about your husband?"

Caroline laughed, a chuckling little laugh. The *naïveté* of this young woman amused her.

"I don't know—depends upon the way it was said and who said it."

Mrs. Harvey's grey eyes widened seriously. She spoke in an intense soft voice. "I love my husband."

Caroline chanted, laughing, "So do we all of us! So do we all of us!" and dropped into the conversational tone to add, "He's dangerously attractive, Mrs. Harvey."

The grey eyes became startling, they filled with tears. "You are—in love with him?" their owner asked in a little breathless voice as though she had taken a leap which, in anticipation, had sickened her very dreams.

Caroline felt her cheeks tingle, less on her own account, however, than for her visitor. "What an extraordinary question!"

Mrs. Harvey let fall her muff and leaned forward, her little shabby hands groping for something, sympathy perhaps, or pardon.

"Oh, I know all this is quite impossible, abominable. But what am I to do? I love him, I tell you, I love him. My husband is very poor. He can't afford to give me beautiful clothes, lovely surroundings, ease, comfort, the things that make and keep a woman lovely. He can go out—socially, I mean—himself occasionally, but I should be ashamed to go with him, since a woman must dress elaborately, or at least expensively, to be seen at all with the sort of people he knows. And I can't bear to hold him back. He loves such things. He is still a boy. I have pretended to be ill, and bored, and indifferent, not to care. But, though he can't make or keep me lovely, neither can he help but be charmed by the loveliness of those women who have the means of beauty. He doesn't love me less, you understand—but——Ah, Mrs. Shaw, you must know what you are doing to him. You must know that when you deliberately set yourself to be fascinating, that you are irresistible. No hold-up man with a pistol in his fist is more unanswerable than you are in your beauty and your self-confidence. But beautiful people are often very generous. I can't ask you, of course, not to be beautiful. I wouldn't if I could. I love beauty. But, at the cost of great agony and humiliation to myself, I can ask you not to be—irresistible—not to tempt my husband, who is so young, younger than you are and not nearly so experienced, not to dazzle his wits and bewilder his will and steal his imagination away from me—the woman he really loves."

The last few phrases of this amazing speech had a sting. Caroline leaned back, turned sideways in her deep chair, flung an arm across its back and interlaced her fingers. She studied their polished nails for a long minute before she spoke. During that minute her perfect little face turned into pink and white marble. An invisible chisel seemed to go over it, trimming away any possible softnesses, any little human blurrings, any common frailty of emotion.

She looked up and smiled delicately.

"My dear," she said, "I have always held the theory that a woman who cannot hold her husband deserves to lose him. You are at entire liberty to try to steal my husband from me. You see, I *am* generous."

Mrs. Jack Harvey's face flushed deeply. With a curious gesture of both her hands she seemed to show herself to Caroline. She too smiled, a devastating smile.

"Mrs. Shaw—I have no pistol."

"Is that my fault?"

"Then you don't mind being a highwayman?"

Caroline shrugged. "You may call me that, of course. I deny the imputation."

"You can tell me truthfully that you don't try, that you have not made the slightest conscious effort to inflame Jack's—interest?"

"But, my dear girl, you're so extraordinary! There's no occasion to tell you anything truthfully. I can only repeat my maxim—if a woman cannot hold her property, she deserves to lose it."

With her grey eyes still fixed on the smiling marble face of her pretty hostess, Mrs. Harvey sat back in her chair. Presently her body relaxed wearily, her head dropped. Her gaze wandered vaguely about the room, as though hunting for some final argument. Last, it rested on the white fur rug beside her chair, to which her muff had fallen. She was evidently making up her mind to go. When she looked up from the muff, there was a different expression in her face and eyes. Something harder, more steely, had come into them. Her pretty pale lips were tight.

"You believe, then, that your maxim is true of any kind of property—that we all deserve to lose anything that through negligence or lack of precautions, or perhaps of means to take the proper precautions, we cannot hold?"

"Why, yes, most certainly. Careless people are very apt to lose their possessions. I think the maxim holds good for most kinds of property—including husbands."

Mrs. Harvey bent and picked up her muff. Then she rose abruptly, smiled, and held out her hand.

"I thank you for a valuable lesson, Mrs. Shaw. I believe you are right. You are not generous, but you are enormously consistent. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," repeated Caroline, a shade of uncertainty in her eyes and voice. When her visitor had closed the grey door and had become inaudible, Caroline moved, went over to her dressing-table, absently swept all her jewels into the box, locked it, and put it away. There was no time to visit Grinsby's that morning. She rang for Mary and began with energy to dress for lunch. Never had she been more exacting as to the details of her toilette. It had never before seemed so important to her to be physically perfect. She reminded herself that Jack would be at Mrs. Dean's that night. A dinner-dance, a *café* supper afterwards. Poor little stupid, blundering Mrs. Harvey!

She let him refasten the sapphires at her throat.

THAT poor little stupid, blundering Mrs. Harvey stepped out into the sunny street and hailed a taxi-cab. She was not in the habit of hailing taxi-cabs, as the condition of her small boots proved, but neither was she in the habit of carrying a fortune's worth of jewels in her shabby brown muff. To-day was a day when habits ceased to perform their duty, it was a day of anarchy. No law-breaker has ever faced a hostile and communal world with such a fiery sense of individualistic justification as did Meg Harvey with the property of Mrs. St. Ives Shaw in her possession.

The taxi took her to her home and emptied her purse. She lived with Jack in a dingy house converted to the uses of flats. Theirs was at the top of a climb which kept its habitual performers admirably slender, and consisted, when attained, of four characterless rooms furnished in abominable varnished furniture. The double bed folded up during the day. The flat was clean, by dint of Meg's passionate and unceasing labour, but it did not lend itself to any more artistic virtues. The wallpapers were an outcry and the big square openings from room to room were draped in travesties of Oriental splendour. The general period of decoration was of Haroun al-Raschid, the type was frankly Cozy Corner. There were in the sitting-room three tapestry cushions as hard as rocks. With the memory of Mrs. Shaw's dressing-room fresh to her senses, Meg saw her home with a relentless eye. Before her bureau she took out the jewels. She did not examine them, but put them quickly into a little leather case which contained already a string of blue beads, a silver Indian bracelet, a golf safety-pin, and a garnet brooch which had belonged to her mother. Amongst them she let down loop by loop the heap of radiance which had so become the swan-like beauty of Caroline Shaw. Meg did not try their effect upon her own soft little throat. She shut them quickly out of her sight, looked once with a glittering challenge into her own eyes, and, facing about, went with the case under her arm down again into the street.

The pawnbroker into whose shop she stepped a few minutes later had seen Meg before. There had once been some other trinkets in the leather case. He made a little hissing sound when she laid the pearl and sapphire ornament down within reach of his dark talons. He looked up into her face once and blinked. They then made their bargain.

It was a little after noon when Meg came out of the pawnshop into a changed and dazzling city. Formerly for her it had been a town of ordinary shops and bargain counters; to-day it was a world's capital, the devil's booth of luxury; it tempted a covetous heart with glittering streets, from the bright windows of which things beckoned

—things, things, things—putting out hands to grasp the passing loveliness of wistful and desirous women. Where men saw other beckonings, women saw things—the delicate tools of their trade, the ammunition, the guarantee of success. Every door of desire has its key: the shop windows were full of golden and efficient keys.

It was only a little after twelve. Meg had

six hours in which to work her magic. Jack would be home at six. She would not take any lunch. Again she hailed a taxi and was swept towards the fulfilment of her sudden dream. Several times on that journey she repeated to herself, like a formula, a spell, or a prayer, "A woman deserves to lose what she cannot hold." And she deliberately invited back to her memory the delicately smiling marble face of Mrs. Shaw.

There are women, in story books, who can dress beautifully on nothing at all. Meg was not one of these. There are other women, in real life, who cannot dress well on ten thousand a year. Emphatically Meg did not belong to that destitute class. She had a brilliant gift for selection and an unerring taste. The money she spent that afternoon received its value to the last wicked shilling. As the hours passed she became gradually transformed. She paid in cash and moulted her old feathers as she went, donning such plumage as suited her present occupation. The cab began to be filled with fascinating, various packages. Even its driver, with his mind of a mechanic, became gradually intrigued. His little pale drab fare was climbing out of a cocoon and spreading coloured wings before his eyes. From the last stopping-place, a beauty-parlour, she emerged shining like a pearl and he was given a final number—home. She stopped once, however, on the way and bought an armful of crimson roses. She paid her large fare and added to it a regal tip. The driver's sardonic smiling eyes followed her into her dingy doorway. "There goes a girl that's spent half her young man's salary for the year, Gawd help him! But—by Jove!—it *paid!*"

"My dear," said Caroline, turning sideways in her deep chair, "I have always held the theory that a woman who cannot hold her husband deserves to lose him."

At the top of her climb Meg found the little girl she had engaged for a week, waiting to help her. Together, in a breathless feminine contagion of excitement, they opened the boxes, stowed away their contents, and arranged the roses in the tiny hall. When she began to dress, however,

Meg dismissed Sally to the kitchen. She changed from head to foot. Silken garments clung to her shapely body; there was Irish lace, there were ribbons, a pair of silver stockings were attached to the velvet-lined garters, a pair of little fairy slippers, silver, and glittering with brilliant buckles, fitted themselves to her tiny feet. She slid into a soft little gown of white lace and georgette—a great fat pink rose catching up an enormous bow of tulle. She added a string of Japanese pearls, delightfully heavy, pinkish and becoming. Then, climbing up on a chair and turning on every possible light, she examined herself with the searching gravity of girlhood. The blonde soft hair was washed and waved and artfully arranged, it fitted her head like a shining helmet, her lips were touched with rose-red salve, there was just a mist of powder across her face and throat. Her natural flush was lovelier than anything put into a box. Meg had not the marble perfection of Caroline Shaw, but there was in her beauty something of the rose, something of June and summer dawn. And her grey eyes, lit by the terror of her soul and the burning wish for triumph, were warm crystals. Meg, even with a stern memory of Caroline to sharpen criticism, was satisfied. She heard Jack's step on the stairs and dropped suddenly down from her pedestal. She covered her face with her hands, did not dare to pray. She went slowly in between the abominable curtains. The little place was sweet with the perfume of the hot-house roses and with the delicate expensive perfume of spring flowers on her hair and neck.

In the tiny hall Jack opened and shut the door. She heard him draw in an ecstatic breath and his eager young voice called to her.

"Meg, where did these things come from?"

"You've forgotten what day this is," she murmured, not going out.

"Day?" A pause of consternation. "Good heavens! Yes. Our wedding-day! Megsie!"

He hurried in—a tall, well-made supple young figure, with a charming look of faunish slyness which peeped in and out of his regular, vividly-coloured face. Here was a dutiful young husband, a business man, and here was, besides—and the combination is more usual than is supposed—an eager hunter for beauty, a piping shepherd with a sidelong look for the flying limbs of a Bassarid among the trees. He came to a stop at sight of Meg. White nymphs with deep wild shining eyes filled with terror and delight do not dwell in Cozy Corners. He came over to her carefully, and carefully put his arms about her.

"You lovely, exciting thing! What's happened to you?" He pushed her away, passed his hand over her rippled hair, breathed in her fragrance, went back from her to recapture the bewildering first impression.

"Where did you get that frock?"

"You don't know quite all my wardrobe, Jack. Don't worry and don't ask questions. I have to have secrets once in a while. Some day"—a sharp breath cut into the soft tumble of her words—"I'll tell you. But this is our wedding anniversary, and I've planned a surprise."

He looked flushed, pleased, and eager, glanced down at his soiled hands, then his expression changed violently, "Oh, I'm sorry."

"What——?"

"I—I have a dinner engagement—don't you remember? Mrs. Dean. You told me to go."

The radiance of her went swiftly under a cloud. Jack couldn't bear that eclipse, that quiver of her face.

"Hang it, Meg, what can I do? I'd get out of it if I could. But it's a dinner-dance, formal. What can I do?"

"N-nothing, I suppose," said Meg.

SHE moved away from him and stood looking out of the window, down into the dingy, empty court. He saw her little bright finger-tips move to her eyelashes. She had always been so cheerfully indifferent to his social adventures; she was usually tired at the end of the day, sleepy and dull and yawning, seemed to have not one of those bounding impulses, like leashed hounds, which so leaped for pleasure in his own veins. But this drooping, wistful, lovely thing at the window, fingering her eyelashes, did want gaiety, obviously would like to show her loveliness, to laugh and dance.

"Look here, darling, I'll break away right after dinner. Mrs. Shaw was taking us to a *café* afterwards."

"Mrs. St. Ives Shaw?"

She did not turn round to look at him, but he flushed.

"Yes. We were going to dance and have supper. But I'll call her up. And, dearest, I'll take you somewhere. I'll come back just as early as I decently can. We'll go to a *café*, you and I, and have our own little supper and dance. Oh, Meggy, I haven't had a dance with you for ages. And nobody has ever danced like you. Come here. You're not crying, are you?"

"Not exactly." She let him turn her round, put up her hands on his coat, and looked at him. "But I've got a girl in, and we've cooked such a nice little wedding-day dinner, and I'd forgotten about Mrs. Dean."

Jack broke away.

"Hang Mrs. Dean!" He whirled to the telephone, got a number, hulloed himself to the ear of a preoccupied hostess.

"Mrs. Dean? This is Jack Harvey. I'm terribly sorry. You'll never forgive me, but it will be impossible for me to get to your dinner to-night. I've only just heard some news, a family matter—it will be absolutely impossible for me to get away.—No, nothing tragic. —Not very. But—yes, I am upset. And awfully sorry—at the last minute this way—I can't apologize enough."

Afterwards he called up Mrs. Shaw.

"Caroline! You'll think me a quitter—I sha'n't be with you to-night. Family news—not exactly bad—disturbing. I *am*—yes, horribly. But you *must* believe me. I'm sure you look devastatingly lovely.—Quite as well for me, then, that I can't.—I'll explain—when I see you. Yes, yes—as much as ever. Good night."

Before the end of this quaint monologue Meg had drawn herself away.

Jack stood up, flushed, and threw out his arms like a man temporarily released from fetters who means to make the most of his hour of liberty.

"*Now*, loveliest, we'll have such a time!" he said. "I'll go in and tub and dress. When's dinner?"

"In fifteen minutes," said Meg in a voice that trembled.

Whatever punishment might overwhelm her afterwards, Meg decided that her deed bore justifying fruit of victory that night. It did more. It helped her to a better understanding of her predicament. The Cinderella garment, the expensive little delicacies, must vanish into thin mist, but she would never again lose sight of the importance to her young husband of a sense of beauty and adventure. Somehow, she must revive and cling to the wildness in her own nature. She must neglect the virtues of Martha, if necessary, let dust accumulate in corners and dishes go unwashed, in order to keep alive in herself the joy of living, the power of laughter, the gift of dancing feet. Women, on their laborious lonely treadmill, became naturally so serious and grim; but this Jack, laughing into her eyes, his lips mobile and sensitive and swift, must have a playmate, a dispenser of beauty and of joy, if not in her, then in some other woman.

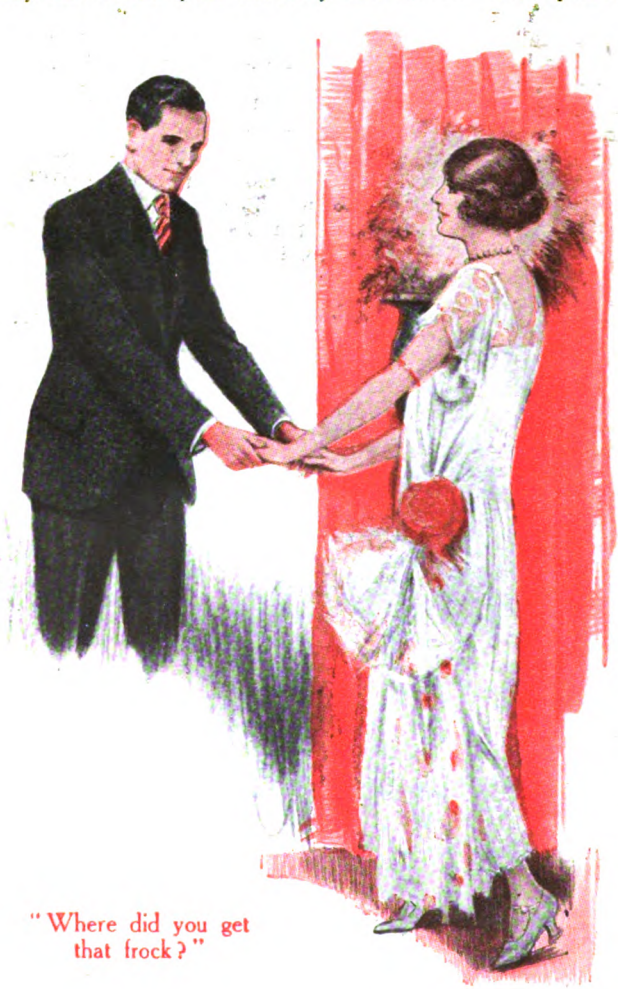
Meg changed from head to foot.

A man cannot play alone, neither can he play with another man quite completely; there are too many rivalries among the members of his sex; to play, one must lay aside all the weapons and become trustful and unselfconscious as a child. And this play was as necessary to Jack as bread and meat. She could see now, as he drank down her loveliness and the dangerous excitement of her mood, how thirsty he had been, how dust-dry his small, neat, ugly home had seemed when, freed from the wire cage of his bank, he had flung himself back, afire with repressions, buoyant, terribly young, laughter in his throat, warm violence in his arms and on his lips. It was a little like playing with a sweet-tempered young panther, she thought, a panther with a soul, and felt her own throat swell with tender and excited laughter.

After the perfectly successful dinner—they had acted quite absurdly and driven small Sally into the pantry to hide her giggles—Jack called a cab.

"I'm going to be extravagant," he said. "Because old Ken has promised me a rise. With what we've saved, thanks to you, old dearest, I think we ought soon to be able to move into a prettier place. Anyway, you deserve a treat and you're going to get one. The theatre first—and then I'm going to take you to a regular eye-opener of a place."

At a little rosy table in a cavern of glow and glamour, of exquisitely-modulated jazz, of decorations startling and picturesque, Jack and his playmate sipped iced drinks, flirted with each other daringly, laughed, murmured comments on their neighbours, and danced like two lovers in a dream. Meg forgot. The cramp of her recent anguish melted from her heart, the pangs of fear and conscience were soothed away. She moved and spoke and smiled under a soft enchantment which contracted the heart of more than one observer with too foresightful a sympathy. Jack himself had a dazed look of beatitude. It seemed to him that he had weathered a dangerous storm and had come, by miracle, safe to his own small harbour with the colours still flying at his mast. He could look into those eyes of Meg's without much shame, thank God!



"Where did you get that frock?"

On their way back from a waltz, a dreamy, swinging, heart-breaking sort of happiness, a finger touched Jack's elbow. He stopped, turned, and looked into the mocking eyes of Mrs. Shaw. She smiled, bent her bright head a little sideways, and let the smile include his wife. Meg met the clear, cool eyes. They reminded her of sapphires. She turned faint.

"It's all right, Jack?" questioned the voice that had taunted Meg with her inability to hold her husband. "Family disturbance all serene? The place we went to first was so crowded that we came on here—all that were left of us." Her look swept Meg from rippled head to silver feet along every perfect line of the French gown, and Meg saw her put up her hand and move it slowly, vaguely, across her undecorated throat. She did not really understand the

momentary fire of challenge, introduction and laughter, Jack's excuses, their escape; but she knew that they came again to their own little table and that she was drinking like a hunted deer. Jack glanced at her strained face.

"Shall we go home?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, Jack—please. Let's go."

His eyes deepened with a fierce, resentful sort of tenderness. "Yes," he said. "Let's go. It's our wedding-day."

EARLY in the next afternoon Jack made a hasty dive into his home. He had been sent on a business errand and ran in to get a certain favourite pocket pen which Meg had a habit of abstracting from his pocket for her own use. Meg was out, and her undirected husband made a search through his own dressing-table and hers. The pen tumbled out of her purse, and, with it, a pawn-ticket. Jack picked this up and his flurried attention settled upon it in a sudden stillness.

What treasure had the child pawned in order to celebrate their wedding-day? He thought he knew her little list of valuables. There wasn't one of them, he imagined, not even her engagement-ring, on which she could have raised the price of the expensive and complete daintiness she had disclosed to him last night. It was really rather queer. There must have been something of her mother's. He decided with a sudden masculine and husbandly anger at himself that he would redeem the thing, whatever it was, and hand it to her that evening as a surprise. It might make a hole in their savings, but with the promised increase of salary in sight he could presently manage to fill up the hole. At any rate, he couldn't quite bear her to sacrifice any treasure—she had so few—for a pretty frock and one night of rapture. He understood only too well what had driven her to this half-desperate exploitation of herself. How beautiful with pleasure and with triumph she had been! He had never known this wild and wonderful Meg before last night. He was half afraid of her. He took the pawn-ticket and went quickly down to the shop.

"You are her husbandt?" the Jew asked.

"Yes. I want to redeem—the—the article—and give it to her as a surprise to-night."

"You haf the money?"

"I sha'n't be with you to-night. I'll explain—when I see you."

"Not enough with me. I will go and cash a cheque."

Jack stopped. On the counter before his eyes the little Jew had laid a stream of azure fire and pearly shimmer. Mechanically Jack Harvey drew it through his hands and moved the fastening, converting the necklace into a bracelet of three bands.

"Clefer!" ejaculated the pawnbroker, nodding and smiling with surprise. "I did nod see that. Very preddy little mechanical device—unusual, hein?"

The blood hummed in Jack's ears and made a fiery mist between him and the man.

Caroline Shaw—he felt under his lips the coolness of her perfumed neck, where the jewelled clasp had left his fingers. The ornament was unmistakable, he seemed to know separately each link, each stone. It

looked at him with the tempting eyes of Caroline, it had her coolness and her glimmer, her linked and quick allure. He must have fastened the necklace carelessly in his wicked moment of emotion, the haze of his blinded senses, it had slipped, had fallen into his pocket, there Meg had found it, had suspected—what? Something—something that had prompted her to a shrewd revenge. No, he couldn't bear to think it out. That must come later—Meg's punishment and his. There would be a scalding revelation, an accounting between them that would scar their love. The tenderness of last night hurt his memory. He would not think of it again, nor of to-night, which must fasten a mask of sordid ugliness, of anger, reproach, contempt, upon the face of their enchantment. He went to the bank, and returned to make his arrangement with the Jew. Then he made his way with a blind white face to Caroline.

He had gone through his painstaking and anxious rehearsal a dozen times before he pressed the white button at Mrs. Shaw's carved doorway.

MRS. SHAW was at home. She would see him. He waited. The charming downstairs room where he had taken tea with her, exciting tea *à deux*, more times than even Meg's frightened fancy had pictured, began to lay its delicate tempting fingers on his mood. The charm of such rooms!—with their soft tints and textures, their fragrance, their little crackling wood fires, their hot-house flowers, their gleaming ornaments and mirrors, their comfortable fireside couch, deeply cushioned, their ranks of pleasantly-bound books, their foreign magazines, the silver tea-service with its faintly alcoholic scent of humming kettle, the aroma of the Oriental leaves, the cigarette smoke, pungent, blue, and drifting; and against this background, in this secret and scented air, possessor of this curtained restfulness, dispenser of comfort and of hospitality, the beautiful hostess, with her suggestive glances, her delicately summoning lips, her murmuring voice and laughter, the flattery of her attention, the thrill of her luxurious confidential pose. Jack moved across the floor, his cold fingers entangled in the chain of jewels.

The dread of this interview was fast melting into the excited anticipation of other moments of expectancy. There came the little tapping steps, the curtains moved away from her like waves cut by a prow, and there stood Caroline Shaw, perfectly appointed, smiling, and holding out her hand. He took it eagerly and looked down, as he had always looked into the pretty eyes of women, with a shy sort of challenge in his own.

"I can only stop a minute, Caroline. I'm really out on a business errand and this is a most undutiful *détour*. But this afternoon I made a queer and rather startling discovery. Have you missed anything?"

Caroline, already seated in her corner of the big upholstered lounge, held out her hand. He poured into it link by link the sapphire chain.

"Do you remember letting me fasten it for you—the other night?"

"Yes." She had flushed faintly and the corners of her lips were now tucked into a feline smile—the smile of some small wayside Sphinx.

Jack began again, feeling rather dry about the tongue and throat.

"I can't imagine how it happened, but the thing——"

Her hand closed on the jewels and she rose swiftly.

"Of course you can't. Has your wife told you about—our arrangement?"

"My wife? N-no. I——" He did not in the least know what to say, since the rehearsal had made no provision for this speech.

"Exactly. Your wife sent you to return the jewels and you hate to admit that you are, like Cupid, a blind messenger. It was—a bargain between your wife and me. She need not have been so prompt. Why do you look so white, Jack? Are you scared? It's quite all right, I assure you. We made a funny little bargain. I let her have the silly necklace—as a loan." She drew it through her hands, looking down, smiling, contemplative.

"I believe I'll keep it now, since you've brought it back to me. But wait just a minute, will you, Jack? I'll send her a note by you."

Still smiling, she dashed a few lines across a sheet of paper at her little desk, slipped them into an envelope, and handed it to him.

"It's not for you to read," she said. "It's our secret, and, even if you did read it, you wouldn't understand one word. Good-bye. You have a very clever wife."

He took her hand. It had no magic. The fingers lay cool, unresponsive, almost repellent, for a second in his grasp. He probed her eyes.

They were hard, bright, faintly critical, the eyes of a not too friendly acquaintance. An angry reaction against her extinguished that little resurrected flame of his temptation. This woman was, after all, a hard little worldling, older, yes, several busy years older than himself. He thought with a rush of rapturous, reverted emotion of the warm June rose that was his wife.

At that moment, however, Meg was not a warm June rose. She was a pale, wrenched victim of the rack. Slowly across her heart the afternoon hours had trod. She had the restlessness, the horrible senseless urge to haste and hurry that afflicts a man condemned to death. Her rifled bureau drawer had prompted a search for the pawn-ticket, its absence sent her flying to the shop. The pawnbroker's description clinched the screw on her heart. Jack had the jewels, he recognized them, he had hastened to return her theft—and to explain it—how? How? How? Twice she took up the telephone to call up Mrs. Shaw and put it down again with shaking hands. At last she drew herself together in a sort of cramp in the corner of her sofa against one of the square hard tapestry pillows to wait for Jack. She did not turn on any light. She could not cry. Her possible defence she went over word by word. "Mrs. Shaw, you see, Jack, gave me permission to take what was not carefully guarded—she refused to give up trying to steal my most beloved possession——" Oh, no, no, no—she couldn't tell Jack about her visit, her appeal. There was a certain pride of wife and woman which, once broken, was no more to be mended than the

On their way back from a waltz, a finger touched Jack's elbow. He turned and looked into the mocking eyes of Mrs. Shaw.

slim stalk of a flower. She could never tell Jack about her desperation, and its consequences. She would rather let him believe her to be a thief—a common thief. Perhaps that was the true name for her. No, surely not—when she had intended to return the ornament after that mocking marble face of its owner had lost its power over Jack, had been taught its lesson. Now—and this had still power to hurt—the mocking face would triumph. For nothing but disgrace, she had lost her self-respect, lost Jack, lost everything. She stayed cramped up in the corner, seeing such pictures as frighten children in the dark. Worse than any of them, the sound of Jack's step came up the stairs.

Jack entered the hall, switched on the light, and called "Meg!" His voice was lower than usual, less confident, less ringing. He touched another button and she felt the scorch of light and knew that he was standing close to her.

"Meg, what's the matter, dear?" He was handing her an envelope.

She took it as though it were the notice of her death, opened it with her small face the colour of the page, and read:—

"I have kept my property and am returning yours, mystified but completely reassured—with this note. My dear Mrs. Harvey, you were right and the lesson is mine. I hated to lose my jewels, but I deserved to, if my maxim is to hold. But I recant. I will take better care of my belongings in the future. At the same time I relinquish all interest in other people's lawful holdings. Fair exchange, of course, is no robbery.

"Yours in the honour that has always existed between thieves,

"CAROLINE SHAW."

ACROSTICS.

OUR twenty-eighth series of acrostics begins with No. 137, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 137.

Now comes the first, now goes the last,
How rapidly the months fly past!

1. Most foully was this monarch killed,
The witches' promise thus fulfilled.
2. A voice and nothing else was she,
This nymph of old mythology.
3. The prisoner, though he may be chained,
Here finds one letter not detained.
4. A language always found in verse,
A word that rhymes with it is worse.
5. A lady, either way the same,
Within herself has lady's name.
6. Narcissus, onion, aconite,
All of them bring our word in sight.
7. Mother of every one, to-day
She comes as daylight fades away.
8. The croquet player knows full well
The man who sank the Inchcape bell.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 137 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on December 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, and nothing else. Flimsy paper should not be used.

One alternative answer may be sent to each light.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 136.

Now solvers turn their minds to politics:
On Lords and Commons all their thoughts they fix.

1. Behead two words, with Shakespeare found, and played:
One will be this, and one be maiden made.
2. Had king (whom Byron names) a son at all?
If so, the name of one can you recall?
3. A baron's title? English watering-place.
His name? That is the quarry for your chase.
4. Plain, narrow, delicate; the crossing done,
Lucre, with silver, could be quickly won.
5. The monster by the maiden's side is seen;
The hero comes, who weds the heroine.
6. Holy, unwise, he thought that in a bride
Meekness must with her beauty be allied.
7. A beast is found, and mountain, who can fail
To find the other? Cut off head and tail.
8. Select an isle, but only half must stay.
The absent half two coins combined display.
9. Thus acts the singer—what else could he do?
Mixed up, a geologic word we view.
10. A lady fair to solvers we present,
Divided is she on the continent.

PAX.

1. U	sica	L
2. P	omp	O
3. P	elle	W
4. E	as	E
5. R	ocheste	R
6. H	akkados	H
7. O	rth	O
8. U	sc	U
9. S	inge	S
10. E	stell	E

NOTES.—Light 1. Shakespeare and the musical glasses. Lasses; maiden, adjective. 2. Numa Pompilius; Byron, Don Juan, i., 35; Plutarch, Life of Numa, ch. 21. Light 3. Edward Pellew, Baron Exmouth. 4. The Pilgrim's Progress, the plain called Ease, near the hill Lucre. 5. Rochester; Jane Eyre. 6. R. Browning, Jochanan Hakkadosh. The name means "holy." 7. The three Musketeers: A-ram-is, Mount Athos, Porthos. 8. Gulliver's Travels, A Voyage to Lilliput; the island of Blefuscu; rouble, franc. 9. Singer, rhyming with ginger; gneiss. 10. French, two words.

"UNCLASSIFIED"

By NORMAN VENNER

ILLUSTRATED BY LAWSON WOOD

"I can't approve of him as your suitor until I know whether he can look after you, my dear."

"SOMETHING more for the cemetery, Professor!" said Kate Latimer, handing her guardian a long, badly-wrapped parcel.

Professor Felix Stark's pale blue eyes twinkled. He took the parcel, ripped off the covering with his quick, able fingers, and dropped the brown paper and string absent-mindedly among the litter on the floor of his study.

It was a portion of a thigh-bone sent to him by a brother Professor for his opinion.

"Horse!" he said with a chuckle, as he thrust it into a half-opened drawer.

"Old Binks must be growing senile to send such junk," said Kate.

She was obviously ill at ease. The Professor watched her as she fidgeted with the specimens he had classified for his anthropological museum that day. The cases were ranged round the walls, and most of them were all but full. The largest case of all was labelled simply "Unclassified."

Into that case he put all the odds and ends which puzzled and bewildered him, until such time as he could make up his mind about them. It was a very convenient arrangement. He thought dryly that it would have been very comforting to have put Kate Latimer, his ward, into that "Unclassified" cabinet. She puzzled him. She bewildered him. He, anthropologist and bachelor, could make little of this exquisitely beautiful creature called Kate, so full of the joy of life and the modern urge to action. Yet he was responsible for her fortune and her future. He knew enough about her to know that her present fidgeting was the forerunner of some ultimatum or other which she proposed to deliver to him.

"I'd better be absent-minded again," he thought, finding in that the usual refuge of the research worker against the threats of life. If she had only been a Piltdown skull, a fragment of a Totem pole, or a piece of prehistoric rib, he would have known what to do with her. As it was, she remained Unclassified, a living, active puzzle.

"Uncle——" she began.

He knew that the decision was upon him when she called him uncle.

"I'm going out with Christopher to-night."

"Eh?" he said, and then, with a distant air, "Now, where did I put that bone?"

"Now don't pretend you didn't hear, 'cos I know you did!" She was modern enough for perfect frankness, anyway. "I can't understand why you don't like Christopher. It's not as though he was a mere lounge-lizard."

"Ah!" said the Professor, seizing a quill pen. "An interesting phrase that." He wrote it down in a large scrawling hand. "What is the precise significance of it?"

"It's what you think Christopher is!" said Kate.

Opposite the word "lounge-lizard" he wrote carefully, "What I think Christopher is."

She looked over his shoulder, and tickled by his humour, ruffled his hair and kissed the bald patch on the back of his head.

"I can't approve of him as your suitor until I know whether he can look after you, my dear," he said, smiling. "You can go and dance. But I didn't dance at his age. Why doesn't he take up research?"

"My dear old prehistoric! He does. He's already invented a new wireless valve that is beginning to make his fortune. But he can't work all the time. He dances—and so do I—to take his mind off his mind!"

"His mind off his mind!" repeated the Professor, helplessly. This seemed to beat him. It must be another modern phrase, he thought.

"Good-bye." She blew him a kiss from the door, and vanished. She was like that. Modern life was like that, very swift and sudden, and charming. He wished he knew more about it.

He whistled a sprightly tune, and as he whistled he moved in a series of curious jerks round and round the room.

HE sat thinking for a while. When other men had been sowing wild oats, he had been already busy among the Aztec tombs piling up a reputation. He had had no time to dance. Perhaps it might have been better if he had.

He rang a bell, and waited for Mrs. Wootey, his housekeeper, to appear. Half an hour later he was still waiting. Mrs. Wootey was like that. As he was wondering whether he ought to ring again, the good lady appeared.

"Hearing you ring, sir?" she began. "Was you wanting anything? I was just putting a chop on the stove for your dinner, sir, and what with the paper-boy knocking, though no one can say I haven't told him to slip the paper through the box and go away, there being fourteen stairs to the front door, and me not so nimble on the legs as I used to be, through the veins, as you know yourself, sir, and——"

Where this sentence might have finished had the Professor not interrupted, there is no knowing.

"Mrs. Wootey," he said, kindly, "I wish to ask a question. Do you know where my ward usually goes to dance with Mr. Christopher Bordon? I meant

"That won't do. We know all about you," said Bill Hunk. "I suppose you don't know who that lady was you were dancing with? That was my wife!"

"Ah! I am charmed, I am sure. I quite thought she was introduced by the manager of this place."

"None of that! That won't wash! No jury on earth'd believe that story!"

"Now, now, there's really no need for threats. Suppose we withdraw and settle the matter quietly?"

The Professor, conscious that they were beginning to attract attention, agreed.

The Sparkler rose suddenly and opened the door immediately behind them.

"We can be quiet in here," he said.

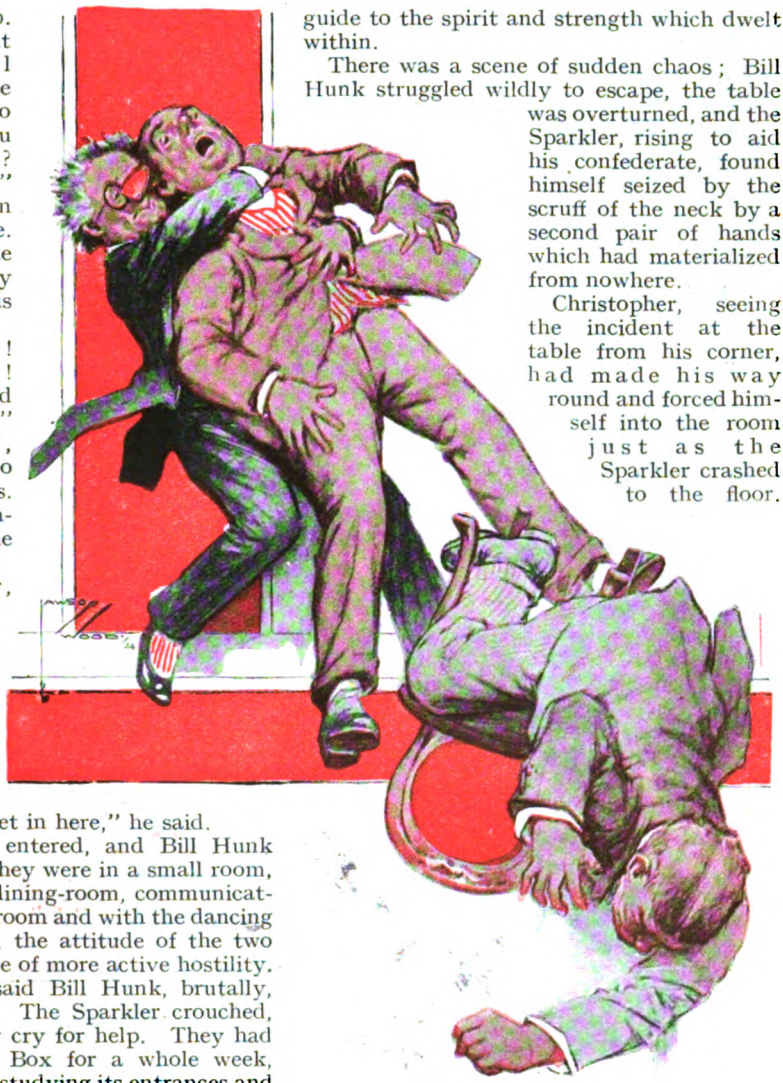
The three men entered, and Bill Hunk closed the door. They were in a small room, used as a private dining-room, communicating with the cloak-room and with the dancing hall. Once inside, the attitude of the two men changed to one of more active hostility.

"Shell out!" said Bill Hunk, brutally, "or be beat up." The Sparkler crouched, ready to stifle any cry for help. They had watched the Egg Box for a whole week, waiting for a mug, studying its entrances and exits, planning the time when the exit through the cloak-room would be deserted and the commissionaire paying his nightly tribute to Bacchus. This was the hour, and they had found their mug, a professor in a false nose with a well-stuffed wallet which they had seen as he paid his ticket money.

And then they had the surprise of their young lives. A chair shot through the air and wrapped itself round the Sparkler's legs. He crashed heavily. A pair of great arms seized Bill Hunk in a grip of iron. For the dancing partner had been right. The Professor was strong. A life spent in digging among tombs had kept him fit, and he had fought in his time with Chinese bandits, Arab plunderers, and nigger bruisers. His gentle eyes and kindly demeanour were no guide to the spirit and strength which dwelt within.

There was a scene of sudden chaos; Bill Hunk struggled wildly to escape, the table was overturned, and the Sparkler, rising to aid his confederate, found himself seized by the scruff of the neck by a second pair of hands which had materialized from nowhere.

Christopher, seeing the incident at the table from his corner, had made his way round and forced himself into the room just as the Sparkler crashed to the floor.



The two men had the surprise of their young lives.

"Beat it!" shouted the Sparkler, struggling to free himself. The Professor released his grip for a moment to open the door leading into the cloak-room. Bill Hunk, seizing the flying opportunity, tore himself free, punched Christopher in the wind, so that he doubled up and released the Sparkler.

The two men dashed through into the cloak-room to freedom.

But for a second only!

Kate, a few seconds behind Christopher in his journey to the door, had run round to the cloak-room to seek help.

"Unclassified"

There was no help there, for it was desolated. As she paused, irresolute, the door was wrenched open, and the two Thugs dashed out. Between her and them stood a high wooden set of shelves. It was crowded to its utmost capacity with hats and coats, furs and wraps. Her mind worked with the swiftness of intuition. She set her shoulder to it, toppled it over with a crash, and the two men were buried beneath an avalanche of garments!

THE police were almost effusively grateful when they arrived a few minutes later, and sorted out the two very much subdued Thugs from the *débris* of the cloak-room.

"Been after these two for weeks, sir," said the sergeant. "May I have your name?"

"Certainly," said the Professor, handing him a card. "That's my name. But this is not my nose. Noses is obligatory here, so I am told!"

"May I have your name?" said the sergeant.

"Certainly," said the Professor, handing him a card. "That's my name. But this is not my nose!"

THE following morning, when Christopher Bordon presented himself in the Professor's study, he found Kate and the Professor gravely contemplating a littered table. Three parcels of flints, a parcel of bones, and two new books from the publishers had arrived that morning. All the parcels had been opened, and their contents lay about in confusion. In the centre of the disordered table lay the Professor's false nose.

"Kate, my dear, here's Christopher," said the Professor. "I believe the modern custom is to say 'Cheerio, old things,' rather than 'Bless you, my children.' The intention, however, is the same."

"Oh, you darling!" cried Kate, putting her arms around him. "You mean——?"

"I mean he's quite capable of looking after you. For that matter, you're quite capable of looking after yourself. It is strange what an insight one gets into character when one can see the human being in action. I'm proud of you both."

A knock at the door was followed by Mrs. Wootey. Her preamble was cut short by the Professor.

"Mrs. Wootey," he said, "these two young things are engaged to be married. Wish them luck."

And then, seeing that the good woman was tending to become lachrymose, he added, hurriedly: "And oblige me by putting away this valuable relic for me." He handed her the ridiculous false nose. "That, Mrs. Wootey," he said, solemnly, "is a fetish of undoubted interest. It has an indisputable bearing upon the more abstruse tribal customs of the Neo-Georgians."

"Hum!" said Mrs. Wootey. "I don't know, but it looks just like a false nose to me!"

And under the Professor's direction she placed it in the cabinet labelled "Unclassified."

HOW OUR NOVELISTS WRITE THEIR BOOKS

A Symposium of Eminent Authors

III.

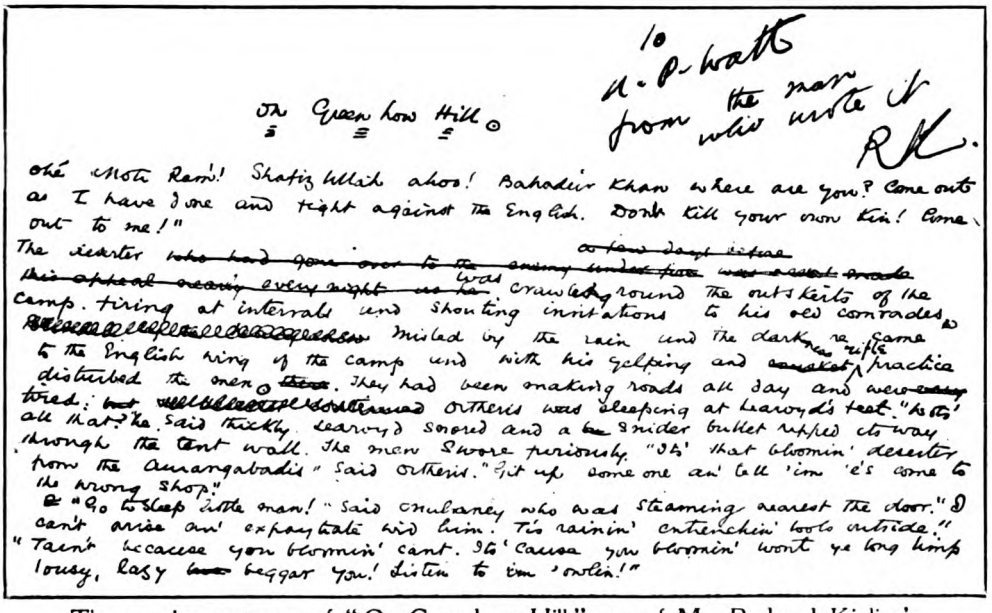
PEOPLE have been interested to read about how our leading authors write their books, and so will be glad to have a further, final, especially distinguished series of these lights. They are really a chapter contributed to English literary history in modern times, because they are so much personal autobiography which, if it had not been rescued, might have perished.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING was asked if he would care to tell us anything of his ways of authorship, but, kindly and courteously, he begged to be left silent. There was no great surprise in that, because, as everybody in the book-world knows, he is only more determinedly silent about himself than Sir James Barrie, and Barrie only more determinedly silent than Kipling.

But Mr. Kipling has been good enough to permit the

Elliott & Fry.
MR. RUDYARD KIPLING.



To A. P. Watt
from the man who wrote it
RK.

On Greenhow Hill ⊙

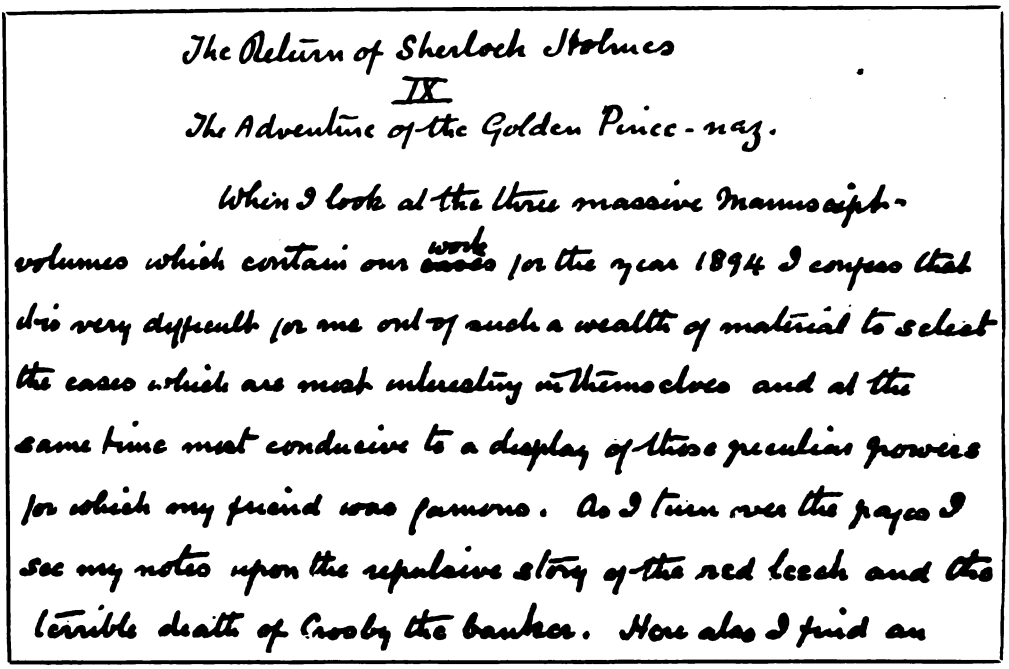
Ohé Moti Ram! Shafiz Ullah ahoo! Bahadur Khan where are you? Come out as I have done and fight against the English. Don't kill your own kin! Come out to me!"

The deserter ~~who had gone over to the enemy under fire~~ ~~a few days before~~ ~~was a real made~~ ~~this appeal nearly every night as he~~ was crawling round the outskirts of the camp, firing at intervals and shouting invitations to his old comrades, ~~[illegible]~~ misled by the rain and the darkness came to the English wing of the camp and with his yelping and ~~[illegible]~~ rifle practice disturbed the men ⊙ ~~[illegible]~~. They had been making roads all day and were ~~[illegible]~~ tired: ~~but~~ ~~[illegible]~~ Ortheris was sleeping at Learoyd's feet. "Wots' all that?" he said thickly. Learoyd snored and a ~~[illegible]~~ snider bullet ripped its way through the tent wall. The men swore furiously. "It's that bloomin' deserter from the Aurangabadis" said Ortheris. "Git up some one an' tell 'im 'e's come to the wrong shop."

"Go to sleep little man!" said Mulvaney who was steaming nearest the door. "I can't arise an' expaytiate wid him. 'Tis rainin' entrenchin' tools outside."

"Tain't because you bloomin' cant. It's 'cause you bloomin' wont ye long limp lousy, lazy ~~[illegible]~~ beggar you! Listen to 'im 'owlin!"

The opening sentences of "On Greenhow Hill," one of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's "Soldiers Three" stories.


The Return of Sherlock Holmes

IX

The Adventure of the Golden Pince-nez.

When I look at the three massive manuscript-volumes which contain our work for the year 1894 I confess that it is very difficult for me out of such a wealth of material to select the cases which are most interesting in themselves and at the same time most conducive to a display of those peculiar powers for which my friend was famous. As I turn over the pages I see my notes upon the repulsive story of the red leech and the terrible death of Crosby the banker. Here also I find an

From the MS. of one of Sir A. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.

reproduction, in facsimile, of a portion of the first page of "On Greenhow Hill," one of his most famous "Soldiers Three" stories. He gave the manuscript of it, as will be seen, to his friend and literary agent, the late Mr. A. P. Watt, and it remains a treasured possession of his son, Mr. A. S. Watt.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

WHEN I am asked what my system of work is I have to ask myself what form of work is referred to. I have wandered into many fields. There are few in which I have not nibbled. I have written between twenty and thirty works of fiction, the histories of two wars, several books of psychic science, three books of travel, one book on literature, several plays, two books of criminal studies, two political pamphlets, three books of verses, one book on children, and an autobiography. For better, for worse, I do not think many men have had a wider sweep.

In short stories it has always seemed to me that so long as you produce your dramatic effect, accuracy of detail matters little. I have never striven for it and have made some bad mistakes in consequence. What matter if I can hold my readers? I claim that I may make my own conditions, and I do so. I have taken liberties in some of the Sherlock Holmes stories. I have been told, for example, that in "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" half the characters would have been in jail and the other half warned off the Turf for ever. That does not trouble me in the least when the story is admittedly a phantasy.

It is otherwise where history is brought in. Even in a short story one should be accurate there. In the Brigadier Gerard stories, for example, even the uniforms are correct. Twenty books of Napoleonic soldier records are the foundation of those stories.

This accuracy applies far more to a long historical novel. It becomes a mere boy's book of adventure unless it is a correct picture of the age. My system before writing such a book as "Sir Nigel" or "The Refugees" was to read

Nelson Evans

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.

everything I could get about the age and to copy out into notebooks all that seemed distinctive. I would then cross-index this material by dividing it under the heads of the various types of character. Thus under Archer I would put all archery lore, and also what oaths an archer might use, where he might have been, what wars, etc., so as to make atmosphere in his talk. Under Monk I would have all about stained glass, illumination of missals, discipline, ritual, and so on. In this way if I had, for example, a conversation between a falconer and an armourer, I could make each draw similes from his own craft. All this seems wasted so far as the ephemeral criticism of the day goes, but it is the salt, none the less, which keeps the book from decay. It is in this that Sir Walter Scott is so supreme. I have been reading him again lately, and his work compares to ours as the front of the British Museum to the front of a stuccoed picture palace.

As to my hours of work, when I am keen on a book I am prepared to work all day, with an hour or two of walk or siesta in the afternoon. As I grow older I lose some power of sustained effort, but I remember that I once did ten thousand words of "The Refugees" in twenty-four hours. It was the part where the Grand Monarch was between his two mistresses, and contains as sustained an effort as I have ever made. Twice I have written forty-thousand-word pamphlets in a week, but in each case I was sustained by a burning indignation, which is the best of all driving power.

From the time that I no longer had to write for sustenance I have never considered money in my work. When the work is done the money is very welcome, and it is the author who should have it. But I have never accepted a contract because it was well-paid, and indeed I have very seldom accepted a contract at all, preferring to wait until I had some idea which stimulated me, and not letting my agent or editor know until I was well advanced with the work. I am sure that this is the best and also the happiest procedure for an author.

MR. P. G. WODEHOUSE.

IN the matter of plots, I find that I use, for short stories, a method exactly opposite to the one which gets me my best results in the case of novels—if in these earnest days I can apply such a dignified name to my longer yarns.

When I want to write a short story, I sit down on one chair, place the feet comfortably on another, put notebook, pencil, matches, pipe, and tobacco handily on my lap, select a character, and then keep on sitting till I have discovered what happened to him the time he forgot his wife's birthday or on the afternoon when he went to Wembley. In other words, the story grows out of the character. It may turn into an entirely different story half-way through, but the character remains the same.

Vice Macdonald.

MR. P. G. WODEHOUSE.

A novel is another matter altogether, far less simple, and it is to the strain of getting plots for novels that I attribute the hideous, lined face and bald head which appear in the photograph accompanying these words. A good novel ought to have a theme, so I start by trying to think of one. Failing in this, I dig up a scene—any scene, so long as it seems to have possibilities. I then take the actors in the scene and try to learn more about them. Then I think of other scenes, bung them down on a bit of paper, and pin this bit of paper to first bit of paper. This goes on for about a week, by which time my drawer contains perhaps ten bits of paper, carefully pinned together and scrawled over with the sort of thing the fever-patient moans in his sleep.

Then, just as I am beginning to feel that nothing will emerge from this chaos, scene number fifteen suddenly clicks with scene number eight. I join them and write them down on another bit of paper. And then, when I am shaving or in my bath, it occurs to me that by turning the blackmailer into a dog-fancier and giving the girl an aunt who keeps rabbits, and eliminating the curate in favour of a pickle-manufacturer from Milwaukee, I have got a faint, shadowy suggestion of a plot.

At this point I really get going. I stand no nonsense from my characters. The pickle-manufacturer has to become a dowager duchess—and like it—in order to fit the scene where the dog-fancier (now a blackmailer once more) goes to the Hunt Ball so as to keep in with the girl's aunt, whose rabbits have been taken away from her and replaced by a racing-stable.

The final stage begins when one or two characters who can't be altered creep into the story. Then I know where I am.

As regards characters, some of those which have appeared in my stories have come from chance remarks from friends about men they have known. Years ago a cousin of mine told me that he was at Winchester with a long, thin, solemn, immaculately-dressed boy who used to wear an eyeglass and talk kindly, but not patronizingly, to the head master. The character, Psmith, who has appeared in several of my books, was based on my idea of that youth, whom I never met. Ukridge was a friend of W. Townend, the writer of sea-stories, who told me about him. Jeeves was an invention of my own. I was in the middle of a short story, when it suddenly struck me that a young man of my hero's mental calibre could not possibly have thought out the solution of the problem in which a friend of his was involved, and it seemed to me that a super-intelligent valet would just meet the case.

When it comes to the actual writing of a story, I always work on the typewriter. I have never tried dictation.

MR. ROBERT HICHENS.

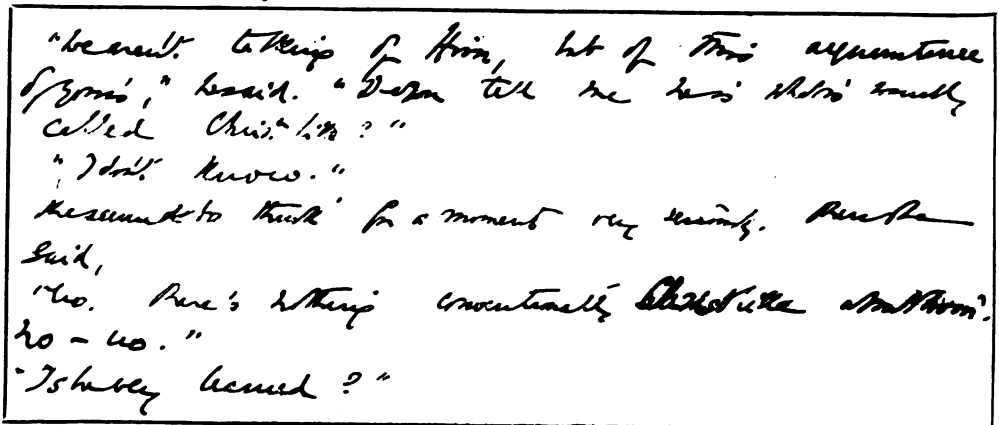
WHEN Mr. Hichens writes a book he starts at the beginning and works on steadily till he comes to the end. He is not at all an erratic worker. Usually, in fact almost every day, he begins work immediately after an early breakfast and goes on for three, three and a half, or four hours. When he is settled down at home he very often writes again between tea and dinner. Recently, when he was for two months on the Riviera, he worked on till about ten o'clock at night and never came down to dinner, but as a rule he stops about seven-thirty.

He does not write very fast and he never writes out of doors. He likes to be enclosed and not to have a strong light in his room when he is at work. He does not make any skeleton of the book before he begins it, and he takes very few notes. Once he did take a quantity of notes. This was for "The Garden of Allah." He took definite notes in the Trappist monastery of Staouëh in Algeria. Then he brought them home and left them in a cab in London and never found them! Of course he takes mental notes, and sometimes he takes a few written notes of scenery.

Russell.

MR. ROBERT HICHENS.

Mr. Hichens tries to work carefully so that he may not have to re-write, but it has sometimes happened that he has been forced either to re-write or to cut out whole passages. In his book "In the Wilderness," for instance, he discarded at least sixty thousand words. He never dictates or typewrites, but writes everything with a pen. He always has some work on hand. Since he finished his newest novel, "After the Verdict," he has done a great deal of work on a slightly shorter story. When it is finished he means to give three months to the writing of short stories. He never rushes to things, but works slowly, and there are not many days when he does not do some work.



From the MS. of a novel—not yet published—by Mr. Robert Hichens.

They were strolling through Cathorpe Spinney, their feet making no sound on the soft turf. Then suddenly John Mason clutched her arm and dragged her behind a clump of undergrowth.

"Look," he muttered. "Don't you: don't let them see you."

And had the woman not been engrossed in the scene in front of her, she would have noticed that every vestige of colour had left his face.

From the MS. of a story by "Sapper."

"SAPPER."

Marian & Sallnow.
"SAPPER."
(Lt.-Col. H. C. McNeile.)

WHAT an appalling question to hold at the head of a man who has never wittingly done you any harm! However, I will do my best to answer.

(1) The coming of ideas. They don't, and when they do I generally find they have been used before.

(2) The working out of characters and plots. In this I am not my own master. I am completely in the hands of the unscrupulous people who force their way on to my paper, and who insist on doing things which I regard as most reprehensible.

(3) I cannot dictate. My unfortunate typist says that I cannot write either. Above is a bit of manuscript to prove it.

MR. PERCEVAL GIBBON.

TWICE I have been asked, within the last year, to lecture upon "the art of the short story"; and I have in each case declined. Because I know nothing about it. For me, a short story is what Edward Garnett called it (as quoted by H. G. Wells: I have not the text by me)—an anecdote. Its ingredients are chiefly a piece of effec-

Hamon.
MR. PERCEVAL GIBBON.

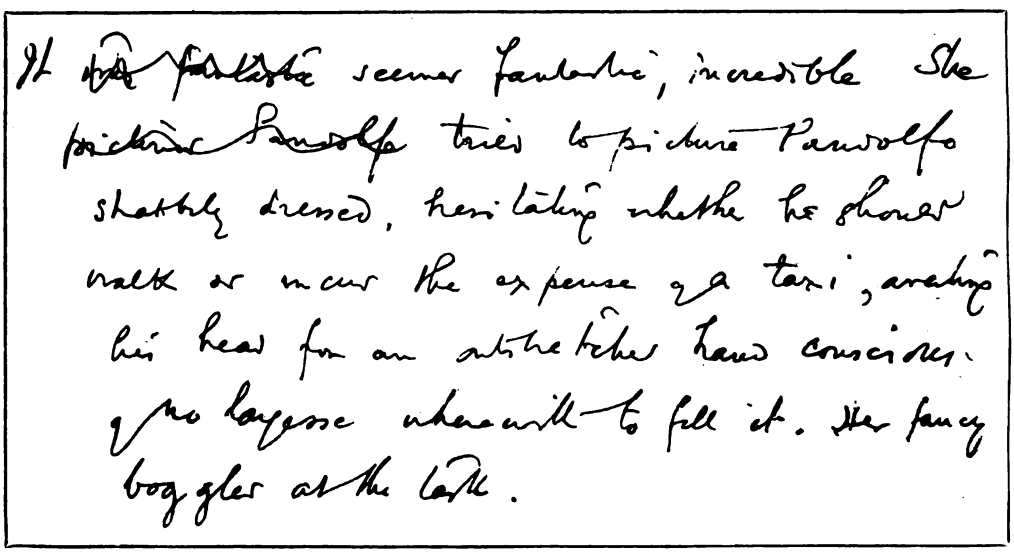
This thing that you have done comes naturally to you; you couldn't have done otherwise. That is so? Well, tell me, how can these Bolsheviks conquer — ever? Torture, starvation, death — they have no other weapons; and against them is all the honour, the sacrifice, the — the love — of the world! Savages with tomahawks against guns and aeroplanes! Don't you — don't you pity them?"

Hope stared at her. He was not a hero and he knew it; but he was a gentleman and he knew that too. Curious that the distinction was not as plain to her as it was to him.

A passage from Mr. Perceval Gibbon's story, "The English Tutor."

tive, or markedly ineffective, action, wherein distinctive characters play their parts against a background of scenery which ought properly to be essential to the whole thing.

I would gladly oblige would-be short-story writers with advice as to how and when to write; but the best I can do for them is to tell them how I do it myself. I make my plots by hand, as it were. I



From a page of the novel Mr. W. J. Locke is now writing.

walk the roads, and walk my garden, chewing them over until they sicken me to the point where I have to get them out of my system by writing them.

There is no difficulty about plots; anybody can make a plot of sorts in ten minutes. Whether he can then present it in acceptable form is another matter; for form is, after all, the essence, the right to exist, and the sole justification of the short story.

Joseph Conrad told me that one ought to know one's slightest character so well that it "blazed at one like a fiery dragon." And he was right, of course; he always was! And that, I think, is the trick of the trade; you must *live* your stuff—eat it, drink it, sleep with it, wake with it, suffer with it, and die with it. Only so can your stories have a genuine existence. Otherwise it is better to hire somebody—me, for example—to write them for you.

MR. W. J. LOCKE.

I DON'T know that there is much to be said about my work. I hit upon a central idea, worry round it, invent characters to develop it, and as soon as I've got a rough and ready scheme I start in to write.

I always write at night. Odds and ends of mechanical work such as correcting MS., typescript, or proofs I do at any old time during the day—but all my work of composition is done from nine-thirty onwards. I compose rather slowly, and nine hundred words I regard as a good day's work.

Hoppé.

MR. W. J. LOCKE.

From my writing table in my library I look straight out over the tops of palm trees, at the Mediterranean and the bastioned prison of the Man in the Iron Mask on the Ile Ste. Marguerite, and the bluest of blue skies. It sounds ideal for a writer, but as I mostly sit at the table at night, the view doesn't matter. At present the windows are wide open and the moon looks in on me and moths come in and fool round the lamps.

MR. E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

Elliott & Fry.
MR. E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

I WRITE nothing by hand nowadays except an occasional article when travelling. The whole of my fiction I dictate to my secretary, who occasionally takes it on to the typewriter direct, but more frequently into a shorthand notebook. I then re-dictate from the written sheets, an occupation which takes far more time and is more laborious than giving shape to the first conception of the story. Practically I work the whole of the time out of doors.

As regards the assembling of the ideas necessary to produce a work of fiction, I have, perhaps, during the last dozen years somewhat changed my methods. In earlier days I was accustomed to evolve a plot and story first, and then create the characters afterwards. To-day I more frequently evolve from my mind what I conceive to be an interesting character, or characters, and one central situation. In other words, my characters to-day interest me more than the scenes in which they move.

My plots, stories, and incidents, such as they may be, come to me without effort. My greatest difficulty is to render the feminine interest in my stories adequate, possibly because I know so much less about the other sex. The feminine character as a whole seems, even in these days of greater freedom, to conform to type and show less variability than the masculine.

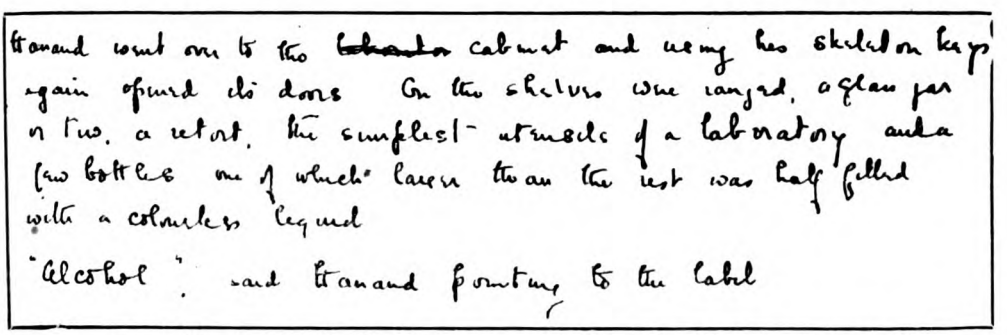
MR. A. E. W. MASON.

Hoppé.
MR. A. E. W. MASON.

I CANNOT give you a fixed rule as to how a book begins with me. Sometimes it is a character, sometimes a combination of people in a particular relationship, sometimes an idea not as yet personified, which I have come upon and taken note of. Or again it may be some story which has been told to me. But usually I start with certain people and certain facts connected with them; and these remain simmering in my head for some years before I ever make use of them.

For instance, "At the Villa Rose," which was published in THE STRAND, began one evening when I was dining at the Star and Garter Hotel at Richmond. The names of Mme. Fougère, the victim of the real Aix crime, and her companion who was one of the accomplices, were cut by a diamond ring in the glass of the window. A year or two later a case heard at the Old Bailey, where a good deal hung upon a door which was first found shut, then open, then shut again, contributed something more and gradually the story took shape.

Similarly with "The House of the Arrow," my last book, in which Hanaud, the French detective, once more appears. A story of a false accusation was told to me. Then came the case in France of a whole district being utterly disturbed for months by anonymous letters which were subsequently traced to



From Mr. A. E. W. Mason's latest novel, "The House of the Arrow."

a young girl. There was a more or less similar plague of such letters which continued for years at a little town of the South Coast; and the problem of the young girl in educated surroundings who took to that particular aberration took hold of me. Thus those two books.

"The Four Feathers," on the other hand, came just from the idea which is the kernel of the book—the fear of fear carried to the point of disgrace, with the subsequent realization that the highly-strung once put to it will go farther than the rest.

As to methods, I never begin until I know the end and most of the middle—though the middle will alter as the characters carry the story along. Then I write it and rewrite it—always twice and much of it three times, for I like an economy of words, and very likely practise it too much.

SIR GILBERT PARKER.

MY methods are quite simple. To me character is everything, and from character comes the plot. Sometimes, as in the case of Charlie Steele in "The Right of Way," characters have been in my mind for a quarter of a century, and at last they take form and live their own lives through my pen.

The book by which I first made my name as a writer of fiction, "Pierre and His People," had for its chief character Pierre, the son of a French gentleman and an Indian squaw, whom I had known as a boy. I used him at last. I do not say that I draw my characters absolutely from life, but they are suggested from life. I have written a number of historical novels, and I am writing one now.

Russell.

SIR GILBERT PARKER.

The main character in "The Seats of the Mighty" was taken from the life of Major Robert Stobo, who was a Scottish prisoner in Quebec at the time of the capture of the province. The chief character in "The Battle of the Strong," also an historical Jersey novel, was taken from the life of a British admiral who became a Continental Prince. The present central character has the same historical accuracy, and he—as they all have been—is as real to me as though I knew him.

The first page of a book is always most difficult, but if you have got that right the rest falls into place, and so it becomes the one true starting point of the book.

I have gone for two months with my story clear in my mind waiting for the first sentence. I was thinking out the story of "No Defence" at Buxton, and had it clear in my mind, but was waiting for the first page. I was sitting on a hillside when a young Irishman moved down it, from two others; and a stone rattled impudently after him. He turned round and said with a grin: "I'll meet you at the assizes, and after that in jail." As that struck the note I wanted, I used it with a difference.

As for working, I never do so at night, but in the morning. Habit is a great thing.

I do not dictate. I suppose of all the books I have written, not more than seven chapters have been dictated, and they only when my arm was lame. I do not dictate because it is impossible to get the same deep concentration which one gets with the pen or pencil in one's hand. I am speaking for myself only. Others can do it—and successfully. I have not been able.

MR. A. S. M. HUTCHINSON.

WHEN I try to analyse how my books come to me, I find the process as mysterious as certainly it must sound to those who read this attempt at explanation. So far as, on examining myself, I can find out, the thing begins with a character which interests me. The character persists in my mind until I find myself knowing everything about him or her, and during the process other characters arise about him. When I get to that stage, which frequently is, off and on, as much as two years, I begin to realize that a novel is going to happen out of these people.

How it does happen I absolutely cannot say. So far as I am able to explain, there does occur one day, quite by chance, and entirely without definite searching after it, an idea which, if it happened to these people, would cause them—what shall I say?—considerable commotion. When that idea arrives I begin to write. Here are the characters all about me, very familiar and intimate friends of my imagination, and there, miles away, is the thing that is going to make them disturbed. And so I start to write and the characters do the rest. I know more or less what is going to happen when they reach the crisis (so to call it), but how they are going to reach it, or what

precisely is going to happen afterwards, I really have no idea at all.

This "explanation," when written out in cold print, sounds desperately vague and futile, and I envy the writers who tell me that they have every chapter schemed out before they start to write. But it is my way, and I have to make the best of it.

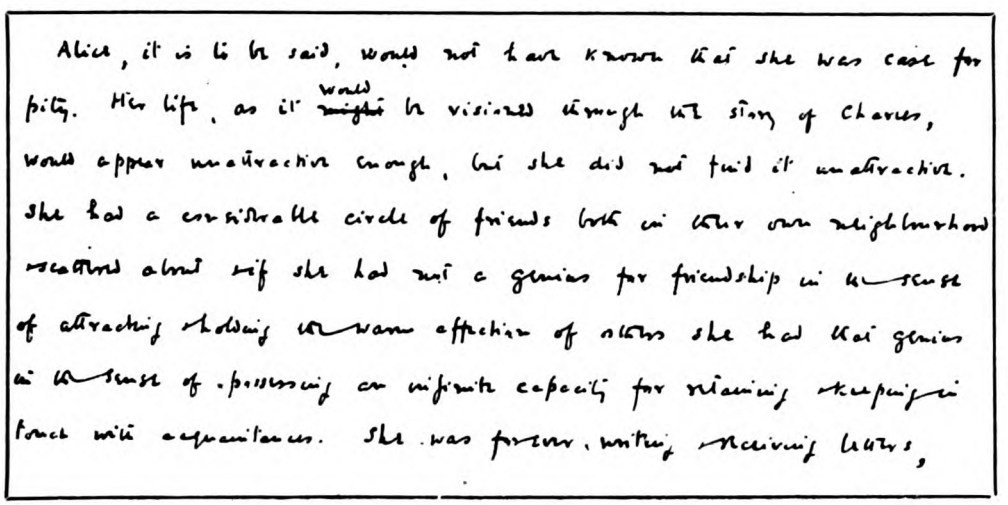
Swaine.

MR. A. S. M. HUTCHINSON.

As to the original coming of the characters, generally they arise out of the face of someone I see in the streets or in any public place. In the case of short stories, the idea for the story comes almost ready-made with the face. In the case of a novel, I suppose the glimmer of the "crisis" is there when the face attracts me, but I can't remember that this ever was actually the case. It is simply that I imagine the character, and it goes on growing until, mysteriously, the idea comes.

As to method, I write desperately slowly, and always in the morning. I write with a pen. I wish I could do it on the typewriter, because I have a painfully neat mind, and I love the neat appearance of type-written sheets instead of my own writing; but although I can type reasonably well, and at times have written directly on to the typewriter, I find it not good when I am engaged on a novel. If I am "writing" three hours on end, I should say my pen is not moving for more than perhaps a third of this time. The rest is thinking, and the pen is an infinitely more nimble instrument for the fits and starts of this kind of work than it is possible for the typewriter to be.

People, by the way, have an idea in this connection that all an author requires is a bit of paper and a stump of pencil. I wish it were so with me. To begin with, I cannot write with a pencil, nor possibly on any sort of paper other than that on which I am accustomed to write, and I require around me what appears to be an enormous number of things, and invariably, just as I am started, I have to get up and hunt for one that is missing. They include, and each one is absolutely essential, a little vase in which my fountain-pen will stand upright, three or four pipes, a very large and very solid ash-tray, two or three boxes of matches, and my pocket-knife to get the tobacco out of the pipes. All my novels are written in school exercise-books, and I have used exactly the same kind of exercise-book ever since I started.



Alice, it is to be said, would not have known that she was cast for pity. Her life, as it would might be visioned through the story of Charles, would appear unattractive enough, but she did not find it unattractive. She had a considerable circle of friends both in their own neighbourhood scattered about if she had not a genius for friendship in the sense of attracting shedding the warm affection of others she had that genius in the sense of possessing an infinite capacity for retaining strengthening touch with acquaintances. She was forever writing receiving letters,

A passage from the book on which Mr. A. S. M. Hutchinson is now engaged.

Important Announcements for 1925.

Among the many attractive features we are able to announce for the coming year none will be more eagerly awaited than the

New Sherlock Holmes Stories by A. Conan Doyle,

which will appear in our issues for January, February, and March.

Our readers will be delighted to know that we have also arranged for a series of stories by

Rudyard Kipling

as well as other series by

P. G. Wodehouse

A. S. M. Hutchinson

Arnold Bennett

and

E. Phillips Oppenheim

In addition to the above, work by the following authors will appear in early numbers:

W. W. JACOBS	JOHN GALSWORTHY
"SAPPER"	GILBERT FRANKAU
H. A. VACHELL	H. de VERE STACPOOLE
W. B. MAXWELL	MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES
STACY AUMONIER	F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

"When I Was Young."

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

will be followed in this series by

LORD BIRKENHEAD, SIR OLIVER LODGE, MR. G. K. CHESTERTON,

and other celebrities of the day.

A PORTER AT PADDINGTON

BY

J. J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY
NORAH SCHLEGEL

IN the stream of vehicles flowing down to the station on that July morning was Miss Ethel Ellicot's dark blue car, which, though the sun was shining now, recorded a recent long run over muddy country roads.

"We are ever so much too early," Miss Ellicot remarked, ignoring the fact that she had urged her chauffeur to race over most of the mileage. Miss Ellicot, it may be observed, was rather given to ignoring facts. She had still to learn, perhaps, that facts ignored remain to confound one, sooner or later, even if one be never so fair and fortunate.

"The train is sure to be at the platform," returned her maid, Norton, a middle-aged woman of placid manner and countenance.

"You have the tickets?"

"Yes, ma'am. And, of course, seats are reserved."

The car stopped, and a porter—a tall young man, with a slight limp and a look which we may vaguely term "nice"—opened the door.

Miss Ellicot got out and spoke to the chauffeur, giving him some forgotten instructions to take home to the housekeeper. "Good-bye, Jackson. I shall return this day fortnight," she finished, and Jackson saluted and drove off.

The porter, his back to her, was placing the last of the baggage on a barrow.

"Cornish express, porter," she said.

"I've told him, ma'am," said Norton, "and shown him the articles you want in the compartment."

"Very well, Norton. Is the train at the platform, porter?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the man, without turning.

The grey eyes of Miss Ellicot gave a tiny start.

"You are sure you understand what articles are to go in the compartment?"

"Yes, ma'am." The porter stooped over the handles of the barrow. On the left side of his neck, an inch below the line of the short hair, set close together, were two little moles.

On Miss Ellicot's cheek came a pink glow—and went out.

"Norton," she said, "find our places in the train. I am going to the bookstall."

"Very good, ma'am," Norton replied, and moved off.

The porter moved off also.

"Porter!"

"Yes, ma'am?" he said, not stopping.

"Wait!"

With an odd movement of the shoulders that might have betokened resignation, he pushed the barrow a few paces farther, out of the traffic of incoming passengers, and halted.

Miss Ellicot went up to him.

"Norman Addison," she demanded, softly, "what are you doing here?"

The blush passed from the young man's countenance. With a faint smile he returned: "One does not expect the needless question from Miss Ethel Ellicot."

"I meant—*why* are you doing it?"

"That would mean a long story—if you cared to listen. You might lose your train, and I should certainly lose at least one more tip. Quite a brisk demand for porters this morning!"

Copyright, 1924, by J. J. Bell.

Her exquisitely-gloved hand waved aside the flippancy. "This is too dreadful!" she said.

"Not so bad as that, Miss Ellicot. May I show you the way to——"

"Be quiet! Is this what you had in your mind when you wrote to me a year ago?"

"Ten months ago, if you please. No; I was not thinking of the railway then. As a matter of fact, I was one of the unemployed for four months before I had the luck to get this."

"Unemployed! But not—not on the—dole?"

"Unfortunately I was not qualified for the dole. It was a somewhat thin time, but since I came to Paddington I have had little to complain about. I see," he continued, smiling at a label on one of the boxes, "that you are going to Lady Penwaring. Lovely place she has down there. I saw her son here the other day."

"Did he—did he recognize you?"

"I carried his suit-case and clubs, and he was most kind. Offered me a fiver, but as I had not four pounds nineteen shillings of change I was compelled to refuse it." The light tone gave place to a serious one. "I mention the incident, Miss Ellicot, lest you, too, in your kindness, should imagine that I am here to receive charity—or pity. And now, with your permission——"

"Wait! I must know more. What is your address?"

"Care of G.W.R., Porters' Room, Paddington."

"Where do you live?"

"Not far from here. You might find the locality a little drab and crowded, and certain features might jar and even shock your sensibilities. Still——"

"Aren't the people awful?"

"Pardon me—I am one of them."

Miss Ellicot made a gesture of impatience. "How long do you intend to keep up this—this farce? What does it lead to?"

"Some day I may rise to be guard on a slow train; but my ambition is to become stationmaster of a wayside station."

"Don't jest! You——"

Came an interruption. A woman, stout, hot, and flustered, with an infant in her arms, a big bag in one hand and three children, one at the toddling stage, clinging to her skirts, gasped a question.

The porter's glance darted at the clock, back to the woman, thence to the girl.

"Miss Ellicot, will you excuse me for one minute?"

She frowned, then nodded.

He snatched up the toddler, grabbed the bag. "Come along, ma'am! Perhaps we can do it. Run, kids!" He bolted, with the party behind him.

Miss Ellicot experienced the unusual double sensation of cold anger in her heart and a hot lump in her throat. But she was composed enough on his return.

"Forgive me," he said; "but they wouldn't have got another train till evening."

"Really! And did you—er—get a gratuity?"

He reddened, but smiled as he opened his hand, disclosing a threepenny-bit.

She stiffened. "You took that from a poor woman!"

"Her circumstances are not known to me, but I have learned that people like her may be easily hurt." He spoke quietly, but obviously under restraint.

"Be kind enough to take my things to the train," she said.

"Yes, ma'am." He gripped the handles and walked off.

A LITTLE later, having placed the heavy things in the van, he appeared in her compartment and arranged the lighter articles according to her cool instructions. He stepped out and was about to shut the door, when she handed him half a crown.

"Thank you, ma'am." Deliberately he dropped the coin between the footboard and platform, shut the door, touched his hat, and moved away. His face was white.

Miss Ellicot lay back on her seat. She was more than ruffled; she had been shocked out of herself; her little world was being shaken as by an earthquake. Norman Addison a porter—a person who carried other people's luggage and got tipped for doing so! Norman Addison, the young man of fashion, the graceful idler—after the war—the dilettante, the fine gentleman—now in corduroys, hideous boots, and a hat belonging to a railway company! Norman Addison, who, little more than a year ago, had asked her to marry him; whom she had refused, less from uncertainty of herself than from respect for her father's counsel of delay! Norman Addison, who, after a lapse of six months, had written her a farewell letter, stating briefly that he had lost everything; who had then disappeared—simply disappeared—from the ken of all who knew him—or, at least, from the ken of those who might have mentioned him to her.

It was preposterous—a tragic absurdity. Surely he had plenty of friends who would have been glad to help! Her own father, for all his counsel, had been fond of Norman. Had he lived——

The invaluable Norton came in from the corridor to inquire whether her mistress had everything she wanted.

"Shall I get you some papers, ma'am?"

Miss Ellicot went up to him. "Norman Addison," she demanded, softly, "what are you doing here?"

she asked, noticing the unexpected lack in the travelling paraphernalia.

"No — yes — anything." Miss Ellicot waved her away. "Stay! How long have we till the train starts, Norton?"

"Eleven minutes, ma'am."

"All right. Get the papers!"

"Very good, ma'am."

Miss Ellicot closed her eyes. In eleven minutes—no, ten now—she would be on

her way. In seven hours she would be at her destination, the guest of her old friend, Lady Penwaring whose son, Edmund, was waiting, as she could not doubt, to propose to her for the third time. Half an hour ago her mind had been made up to yield to him—otherwise she would not have accepted his mother's invitation. And now her mind was restless, dissatisfied, troubled. She liked the man in Cornwall, liked him very much, and yet——

She opened her eyes and looked out at the platform. Norman went past, carrying a couple of suit-cases. How well he bore himself!—she admitted it resentfully; nothing slouching or obsequious about him; and the slight limp, souvenir of the war, was a dignity in itself. "Hateful!" she murmured, withdrawing her gaze. She closed her eyes again, but only to encounter a vision of the little incident of the stout flustered woman and her family. She sought to convince herself that Norman had done what he did because she was there—to annoy her, perhaps; but there was no getting away from the kindness on Norman's face as he snatched up the toddler, the goodwill in his voice when he spoke to the woman and youngsters. And the threepenny-bit—her contempt recoiled upon herself; she had descended to an unworthy sneer; she had been meanly cruel, nay, she had behaved abominably! And the half-crown—at the thought of it her cheeks grew hot.

NORTON arrived with a bunch of weeklies, a monthly magazine or two.

"They are very busy at the bookstall to-day," she remarked, "and the train is full."

"Where is your seat, Norton?"

"Four doors along, towards the engine, ma'am. I shall come to you every hour, ma'am, in case——"

"How long now till we start?"

"Three minutes, ma'am."

"Stay here for the present."

"Very good, ma'am."

Miss Ellicot looked out at the platform. It was in her heart to tell Norman she was sorry. But there was no sign of him.

"How long now?" she asked over her shoulder.

"A trifle over a minute, ma'am."

Suddenly it was borne on the girl that she did not want to go to Cornwall, did not want to marry the man waiting there.

"Quick, Norton!" She got up. "Open the door!" She got out. "Throw out my things and get your own. We are not going by this train."

Just for an instant Norton stared. Then—"Very good ma'am," she said and proceeded, deliberately, to pass out her mistress's property. That done she fled to secure her own.

A whistle screamed—then another. The guard was at Miss Ellicot's elbow.

"Not going, miss?"

"No"—the guard slammed the door with one hand and received money with the other—"I'll wire you about the boxes in the van," said Miss Ellicot.

The prodigious train began to move. Norton joined her mistress.

"Norton, send a wire to Lady Penwaring—'Greatly regret must abandon journey, am writing': then ring up the Planet Hotel and engage rooms. When you have done that, wait for me at the bookstall."

"Very good, ma'am. Shall I call a porter?"

"No."

"Very good, ma'am." And the admirable Norton went upon her errand.

Three porters in turn offered service to Miss Ellicot, and she was on the verge of engaging the third when Norman came down the platform. Haughtily she signalled. He hesitated, then came forward. She pointed to her property.

"Will you kindly get a porter to take charge of these for a few minutes? I have changed my mind and shall want a taxi shortly."

He began to gather up her things.

"No!"

He regarded her a little less grimly, then dropped over the edge of the platform, stooped for a moment, and returned to her level, holding out the half-crown.

"This is yours, ma'am."

For an instant rebellion—then she took it and put it in her bag.

"Thank you," she murmured.

"Thank *you*, ma'am. Allow me." He gathered up her belongings. "A taxi?"

"I wish to speak to you first. Let us walk up the platform."

Paddington is so spacious a station that comparatively quiet spots are easily found.

"I wish to say that I am sorry"—she faltered, for she was not used to apologizing—"sorry for having—having been so abominable."

His expression softened. "Please forget about it," he said, gently. "I ought not to have—well, gloried in my shame." His smile was a little sad. "And now that I have the chance, let me say how sorry I was to read of your loss. Your father had no great opinion of me, but I had a sincere respect for him. I was tempted to write to you, but having decided to drop out——" He paused.

"It seems a long time ago, but I miss

him every day. There are so many things to remind me of him." She also paused for a moment. "This meeting of ours reminds me of him. The last time I saw you, you were walking with him in the gardens at Dorminster."

"Yes. He gave me some good advice that afternoon."

It may have been the slight constraint of his tone that drew the girl's quick glance.

"Well," she said, more lightly, "I must not keep you talking here, but I should like to know something—if you don't mind telling me—of your—your adventures since we met last. I am staying to-night at the Planet. Will you dine with me—at the hour that suits you best?"

"Thank you," he said, stiffly, "but I fear I have an engagement. You see, it happens to be Wednesday, and on Wednesday evenings I take my landlady's kiddies to a picture-house."

"I see," she returned.

But her proud look wavered. He saw that she was wounded.

"Forgive me," he exclaimed. "Forgive what must have seemed unforgivably ungracious. But the truth is that I live in constant dread of—of charity. You understand?"

Her eyes answered.

"The kiddies can have their pictures to-morrow," he said. "Let me come to see you for an hour to-night—after dinner."

"But why not to dinner?" The words were scarcely uttered when she was sorry. Perhaps he had not the proper garments. Perhaps he feared encounters with old acquaintances.

He seemed to guess her thoughts. "No, it's not that." He smiled dryly. "I can still put up a fairly presentable appearance generally, but, unfortunately, one can't dine in gloves." He held out his hands. "Of course, I can make them cleaner than they are now."

"Oh, dear!" she said under her breath, and remembered him as a violinist above the ordinary. Then, abruptly: "I think you ought to be proud of your hands!"

"Thank you. I'm not ashamed of them; but they just won't do for the Planet restaurant."

"You are considering my feelings?"

"One does not willingly affront one's kind hostess."

"I assure you——"

"Please! I shall, if I may, call upon you at nine o'clock."

"But don't you—don't you understand that I have put off my journey in order that——" She stopped short, colouring.

"You must know that I could not have dreamed of that," he said, presently. "I'm not yet sure that I'm more happy than touched. But I can't refuse the honour, and I shall come, gratefully, to the Planet—at the hour you name."

"Let it be seven-thirty—and we shall have a private room. There are so many things I want to know about."

"I think you will find more questions to answer than to ask. I have had no thrilling experience, but I am still interested in the little world I left ten months ago."

"The little world you are soon coming back to."

He shook his head.

"We shall see!" Miss Ellicot was recovering her self-confidence. "And now I'll cease from troubling. Will you get me a man to carry my things?"

"Why on earth?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose it's silly of me, but——"

"I assure you that I don't feel a porter inside."

She smiled in spite of herself. "Oh, very well—if you must. I have to find my maid at the bookstall."

A little later he saw them into a taxi.

"Goodness! I had forgotten to wire about my boxes in the van!" cried Miss Ellicot.

"Do you wish them sent back, ma'am? I'll attend to that."

"Thanks, porter."

The attentive Norton took out her purse.

"Planet Hotel," said Norman to the driver, and shut the door quickly. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he touched his hat. But the twinkle was short-lived. "Thought I was getting over it," he said to himself, and went back to duty.

Norton put away her purse. Somehow Miss Ellicot felt that she ought to say something.

"It is not often, Norton," she remarked, "that a railway porter avoids a tip."

"Not often, ma'am."

"You were astonished?"

"No, ma'am."

"No? But you will be astonished when I tell you that that porter is dining with me this evening."

"No, ma'am."

"Then you recognized him as a visitor to Dorminster?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Miss Ellicot thought for a moment or two. "He is at Paddington," she said, "because he is writing a book about—er—porters."

"Very good, ma'am."

DURING dinner Norman had slipped back into the old life—almost. He had enjoyed the luxury a little less than he had expected. Possibly it had been too reminiscent to be perfectly pleasurable; perhaps the hostess's remembrance of some of his tastes had stirred regret as well as gratification. He had not been sorry to leave the table.

Now the windows stood open, and he and the girl lounged at a balcony screened by flowering shrubs, beyond reach of the shaded lights above the table. The night was dark and warm. The hum of London rose, mingled with the music of an orchestra on a lower floor. It was all very easeful after the dingy little room above the narrow, noisy street where he lodged, but far less enervating to resolve than the nearness of the girl he had been striving to forget.

"I think I shall answer no more questions," she was saying, "or the evening will be gone before I can ask any—not that I want to seem an inquisitor."

"Ask what you will, Ethel," he replied. "I'd rather not talk about myself, because I know it's a dull subject, and because—well, because I don't wish to appear as one craving for pity."

"I understand. In any case, I don't think I should ever offer you pity, Norman, because I don't believe you know what it is to be really unhappy."

"H'm!" muttered Norman, with a faint smile.

"However," she went on, "it is your doings rather than your feelings that I want to know about. In the first place, why did you become a railway porter?"

"I could not find anything else."

"I mean—what made you take such work?"

"Necessity—sheer necessity."

"Am I to understand," she said, gently, "that you were in need of—of money?"

"When I got the job I had thirty-nine shillings left."

"Shillings!"

"Shillings are wonderful things when one has no pounds. Yes, Ethel, I was what is called 'broke'!"

She shook her head. "It's difficult to grasp. I don't want to intrude, but you may remember that you once"—she blushed—"spoke to me of your affairs."

"I remember. I told you that I possessed some thirty thousand pounds so safely invested that I was ashamed to mention my income to you."

"Yes, you told me that. And a few months later you had thirty-nine shillings!" She drew a long breath. "You will admit that it is enough to make a friend curious."

"So kind a friend need not remain so. The money went in speculation on the Stock Exchange."

"In those few months?"

"In the last two of them, for I made a bit to begin with."

"It must have been wild speculation."

"It was. Of course, you know I'm an ignoramus about business."

"But why did you want to make more money—Norman?"

"What I had seemed so little."

Perhaps she felt it was only a half answer, but she did not pursue the question.

"Well," she said, "the money being gone, you had still your friends."

"I did not forget it, Ethel; but the loss of the money had an odd effect on me. I remember how my first feeling was that of utter helplessness and despair, but that passed. I had broken something that could not be mended, grasped at a desire and lost it for ever. I had neither the training nor the ability for the sort of work that means much money. In my own folly I had made my bed, and I made up my mind to lie on it—if possible, without whining. And I have at least learned that there are worse things than comparative poverty."

"You are satisfied with your lot?"

"Is one ever satisfied with one's lot? I am satisfied to the extent of knowing that what I most desire is unattainable."

"Then you are resigned to remaining as you are?"

"I shall try to advance myself in the railway service. I think I mentioned my ambition this morning."

"You expect to find happiness at a wayside station?"

"Were we talking of happiness?" he asked lightly, as it seemed to himself. "But why not—at a wayside station—or at Paddington, if Fortune decides that I remain a porter?"

She did not answer, and there was silence till she said, with unwonted diffidence:—

"That little estate of mine needs someone who is a gentleman to look after it. Will you help me by accepting the post?"

"Charity, Ethel, charity! But," his voice softened, "I kiss your feet for the thought."

"You are impossible!"

"I should be, as manager of your estate. And you know it," he said, quietly.

She waved the remark aside, saying: "I will ask another question. Will you tell me what my father said to you the last time you came to Dorminster? My father, as you may know, died suddenly, without having suffered any illness. On the evening

"Why did you become a railway porter?" she asked.
"I could not find anything else."

before he died he began to speak of you, and I have always felt that he was going to tell me something that was on his mind, when we were interrupted by an old friend's dropping in; and the chance never came again. I wish very much to know what my father said that afternoon in the gardens. You called it good advice. What was its nature?"

Norman hesitated before he replied: "I think you must excuse me, Ethel. It cannot matter now what your father said then."

"Please let me be judge of that. I know this much: that at the last he feared he had advised you wrongly."

"No; it was I who acted wrongly on his advice. Well, I suppose I must tell you." Norman checked a sigh. "Your father was a practical-minded man, and when I spoke to him about you and my own small affairs, he put things—not brutally, but very frankly. He pointed out that you had never lacked anything and that you were going to be an extremely wealthy girl, with an income twenty times the income that I could show——"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Miss Ellicot.

"He then asked me, quite kindly, if I thought I was the sort of man to be satisfied in the situation of husband to so wealthy a girl. I had to admit that, while it was the girl, and not her money, I cared for, the situation might be a testing one for both. At the same time, I asked him if he could not hold out any hope for me. To which he replied that I must work out my own salvation. Why did I not do something worth while with my life and the money I had? It was a useful sum, he said, and the trade of the country, he prophesied, was about to boom. Fortunes would be made quickly. Why not find an opening in commerce for both energies and money? And that's the whole story."

"But he did not suggest the Stock Exchange?"

"On the contrary, he warned me against it."

"Then who suggested it?"

"A friend whom I consulted about putting the money into a business."

"May I know his name?"

"I am sure he was sincere in his advice. I believe—in fact, he told me—he lost heavily himself."

"Yes, yes—but who was he?"

"I'm sorry, Ethel, but I don't feel at liberty to say. If there is anything else you would care to ask——"

"There is nothing else," she said, quietly.

He lifted his gaze. She was looking out at the night. Music drifted up from the lower windows. There was enough light to show the proud tilt of her head, the sweet haughtiness of the profile, the hint of sadness at the mouth. He rose slowly.

"Have I hurt you, Ethel? Heaven knows I don't want to be ungracious—to you of all people. Only——"

THERE was a knock, and a servant brought in a telegram. Miss Ellicot took it over to the table. "No answer," she told the servant.

With a smile she turned to her guest, holding out the message. "An opportunity for you at Paddington to-morrow," she said.

Norman read: "Cruelly disappointed. Leaving for town night train.—Ned Penwaring."

Watching him, she saw him wince.

"Penwaring is a very good fellow," he remarked, handing back the telegram. "But are not you travelling to Cornwall to-morrow?"

"I cannot say—till I have seen Mr. Penwaring. I—I shall meet him at Paddington."

"What—at seven in the morning?" Norman suddenly found himself hating Penwaring.

"You forget that I am a country girl, more or less. Do you find the mornings difficult?"

"As it happens, I am not on early duty to-morrow. I shall not have the honour of handling Mr. Penwaring's suitcase."

The tone of the second remark gave Miss Ellicot a little thrill, but she contrived to look vexed.

"Oh, dear, how provoking! Is it impossible for you to be on duty?"

"Not impossible—and I shall be there if I can be of service to you," replied Norman, quite at a loss. A few hours ago she had seemed to detest his performing a porter's work, and now——

"Thank you so much! You see, I don't wish to have Norton with me, and—and I'm rather helpless without her."

"Do you wish me to turn up as a porter, or——"

"Oh, as a porter, please!"

He laughed in spite of himself. "I shall be there, ma'am," he said.

The clock above the fireplace tinkled ten. He held out his hand.

"Good night, and thanks for a charming evening."

"So glad you have enjoyed it, porter. Good night."

It was well, perhaps, that he went then. His pride was tottering, and one may suspect that she knew it.

NOT many people were on the platform when the train came in, and not many alighted.

The tall, smartly-attired young man, with the tan of sunshine and salt air on his well-favoured countenance, nodded pleasantly to the porter who had opened the door.

"Hullo, Addison! Still at it?"

Then, just behind the porter, he caught sight of Miss Ellicot. For an instant wonder held him; then he sprang forward.

"Ethel, what a surprise, at this hour! But what does it mean? Don't tell me you are on the point of leaving town? Your wire yesterday was an awful blow."

"As a matter of fact," said Miss Ellicot, with a delightful smile, but never a blush, "I came to meet you. Your wire was sent on to me at the Planet from Dorminster."

"You came to meet me? You!"

Norman standing by, as he had promised to do, with a couple of suit-cases, experienced a sickness of heart, and would fain have retired. What small devil had inspired Ethel to stage-manage the cruel little play? Revenge? Desire to punish him for having rejected her charity? Oh, surely not! Always he had known her as a wilful, impulsive girl, given to the unconventional; but never spiteful or mean.

"Yes, I did really come to meet you," she was saying; "but, of course, you guess that I have, as my father used to say, an axe to grind."

He smiled not quite readily. "You know I'm at your service, Ethel," he said, in a lowered voice. "It would seem to be something urgent, but not, I trust, serious."

"I scarcely closed my eyes last night"—it was true enough—"I want to buy Lord Eastwater's steam yacht."

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, then gave a laugh. "Well, why not? He wants only a hundred and eighty thousand for it! But let me drive you to the Planet, and we can——"

"I must know at once whether you will help me—with your advice——"

"My yacht is a schooner. I know nothing about steam——"

"That is not the advice I am asking for. I have not got a hundred and eighty thousand pounds, or anything like it, to spend on a yacht, but, with your advice, I see no reason why I should not quickly make the sum. You understand, Mr. Penwaring?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't. But why discuss it here?"

"Just a moment, please. Last night I was reminded of something you told me last year. It could not have been private, for I heard it afterwards from other people. And so I am asking you to be generous and show me how you so cleverly made a fortune——"

"Oh, really——" He smiled weakly and wet his lips.

"——on the Stock Exchange, just a year ago. Thirty thousand, was it not?" After all her smooth, pleasant speech the question sounded somewhat sharp.

And now she was watching him with cold, keen gaze. She saw the eyes narrow, a tinge of grey come into the tan, the sidelong, fearful glance at the man who held his baggage. And then she turned to Norman, saying:—

"You see, I had to know for certain." Her voice shook.

Norman nodded. He was pale but steady. Very gently he set down the suit-cases; softly he stepped close to Penwaring; quite mildly he said:—

"Come on!"

One may well believe that Miss Ellicot had not thought of a fight with fists on a Paddington platform. But for her sake, at least, it was mercifully short. Mr. Penwaring went down, and a couple of officials grabbed Norman, while a policeman appeared hastening to the scene.

Miss Ellicot was white and trembling, but at the sight of Mr. Penwaring making to rise she seemed to regain control of her nerves. Bending over him she said, quietly but distinctly:—

"Give him in charge, and I swear you shall not have a friend left in London!"

NORMAN, having put her into a taxi, was alarmed by her look of helplessness and weariness.

"Would you mind very much," he asked, "if a railway porter saw you safely to the hotel?"

"Not very much, if the porter doesn't."

So he got in beside her. For a little while after the cab started there was silence. It was she who broke it.

"What will happen to you?" she asked.

"I suppose it means the sack."

"Oh, dear!" Miss Ellicot clasped her hands—otherwise she might have clapped them. "And I did mean to do you a good turn. But it seems that I can only harm you."

"Please don't talk nonsense. I shall be all right. My regret is that I made that scene in your presence. It was unpardonable."

"No! I'm beginning to like the thought

of it—and it was far, far less than he deserved—the traitor! I can't bear to remember that you first met him at Dorminster. And worst of all is the thought that father, however unintentionally, set you on the way to—to disaster."

"You must not think of it in that way, Ethel."

"I can't help it, and you won't allow me to forget it. I shall remember it when I am an old woman, a—a lonely old woman. I wish I had no money, no estate, no anything. I almost believe you are right about the wayside station." And lo, Miss Ellicot wept softly!

Yet to her credit be it recorded that she had kept her tears as a last resort.

"For Heaven's sake, Ethel, don't cry," said the unhappy young man.

"What's the good in saying 'don't cry,'" she sobbed, "when there's no reason for stopping? Oh, how miserable I am!"

"Dear, don't say that! What can I say to comfort you?"

"Nothing! You—you always say the wrong thing!"

"Darling, I'd do anything for your happiness——"

"No, you wouldn't. You wouldn't manage my estate——"

"If that will give you happiness, I'll try," he cried, desperately, "but I warn you——"

"I've changed my mind. The offer is withdrawn. I c-couldn't have you as a—a servant. I—I wish you would show me how to do things on the Stock Exchange."

"Dear Ethel, you don't know what you are saying. Do stop crying! And you are shivering! Are you cold?"

"P-p-perishing!" And she blinked at him.

"God forgive me!" muttered Norman, "but I can't have you perish"—and took her in his arms.

"Norton," said Miss Ellicot, a little later, "'phone Dorminster to send the car—and then pack up. We are going home."

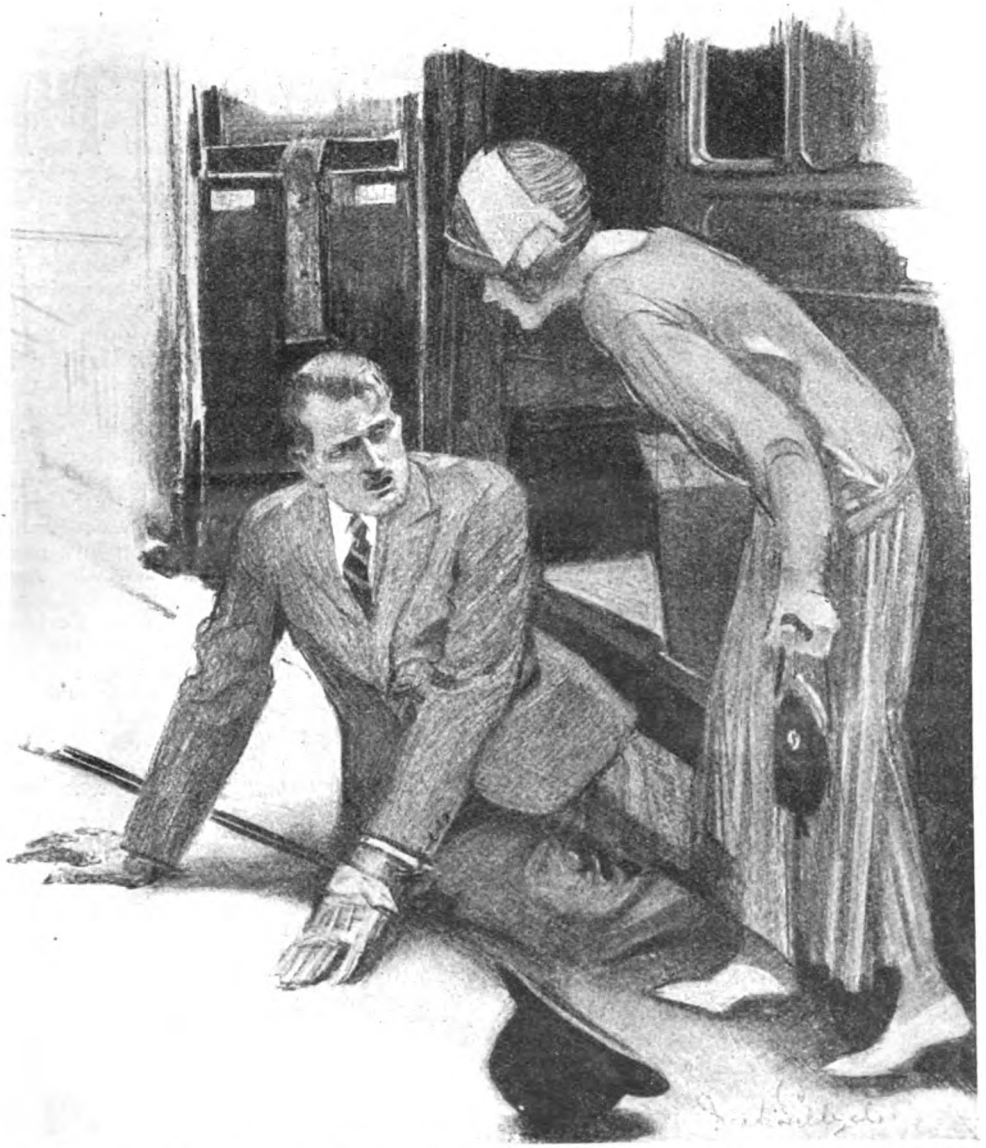
"Very good, ma'am."

"And—h'm—Norton!"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"I am going to be married to Mr. Addison."

"Very good, ma'am." Norton looked at her mistress. "*Very* good, ma'am."



Bending over him she said, quietly but distinctly: "Give him in charge, and I swear you shall not have a friend left in London!"

What Are Life's Greatest Satisfactions?

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY A. K. MACDONALD

CERTAIN answers to this question leap instantly into the mind. For example, to a very beautiful woman her beauty must be an intense, continuous, and supreme satisfaction, not surpassed by any satisfaction experienced by anybody. Feminine beauty is an agreeably common phenomenon, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries. Hence I do not say merely a "beautiful woman," but a "very beautiful woman"; if the satisfaction is to be supreme the beauty must be extraordinary. You may argue that beauty is a gift of Heaven; there is no merit about it; therefore it ought not to be a source of satisfaction. My subject, however, is not what ought to be but what is. Moreover, I doubt whether moral excellence is any less a gift than beauty. People are born good, as people are born beautiful. Good people watch over, cherish, and enhance their goodness, and beautiful people must carefully tend their beauty. It is just about as difficult to keep beautiful as to keep good.

Admiration, love, adoration, luxury, wealth, and real power are the rewards of extraordinary feminine beauty—always have been and probably always will be. Take a very beautiful woman to whom Heaven has vouchsafed a great operatic soprano voice. Think of her in her triumph receiving frantic ovations from the élite of the world at the end of an evening's song. She is lovely; she is a great artiste; she is a richly-paid worker. Life cannot offer a satisfaction more thrilling than hers. She reaches the apex of human glory. You retort that beauty fades. I agree. But while it lasts——

Then great wealth. Perhaps no attribute is more criticized, more contemned, than great wealth. Millionaires themselves deplore their millions and enlarge copiously upon the worry thereof. But they take no steps to get rid of their millions. On the contrary, they do all they can to increase them. And almost no scorner of millions would reject the opportunity of becoming a millionaire if it came to him. The inevitable conclusion is that great wealth brings immense satisfactions—of power, of influence, of self-indulgence, satisfactions which the majority of mankind reckon, in practice, as among the greatest. We say that there are things that money can't buy. True. But there are also things that virtue can't buy, and that beauty can't buy. And virtue may not last; beauty never lasts. Whereas nearly always great wealth lasts, because the men who have the wonderful wit to acquire it have the equally wonderful wit to keep it. Further, millionaires are invariably realists; they see things and people as things and people actually are. This alone is a towering satisfaction, for it is based on an extreme and rare appreciation of truth.

Then the satisfaction of superlative special faculties exercised to the full with high conscientiousness and skill, as for instance by the great lawyer, the great doctor, the great statesman, the great preacher, the great artist, the great writer, the great philosopher, the great scientist! All these men work because an imperious instinct compels them to work. They are by nature specially fitted for their work; they do it supremely well; they enjoy doing it, and they would be miserable if they were prevented from doing it. Their existences may be laborious, but never dull, and for the most part they are very exciting. As a rule such beings acquire sooner or later terrific prestige. When they die they die in the conviction that they have favourably affected not only the lives of individuals, but the thoughts, habits, and destinies of nations, perhaps even of the whole human race, and that their names are thenceforward

Copyright, 1924, by Arnold Bennett.

and for ever incorporated in history. Conceive the profound satisfaction hidden beneath the modesty of such a world-benefactor as Pasteur. Well, we simply cannot conceive it! Pasteur and his infrequent equals alone could conceive it.

However, we need not occupy ourselves unduly with the supreme satisfactions, for they are confined to the supreme people, and very few of us are called to be supreme. Fortunately few of us want to be supreme. We are instinctively aware that being supreme is no light business—(indeed it is a terrible business)—and that though the supreme satisfactions may be glorious the price paid for them in emotional and intellectual stress and general sacrifice is far heavier than we ourselves could bear. Let us therefore consider the satisfactions that may be common to us all.

I hear at once the word "love"—requited love

But I must pause here to point out that the human race is broadly divided into two sorts of temperaments—the active (often ambitious) and the passive (contemplative, brooding). It is the latter which is passionate, and to which love means the most. I must point out also that the human race is divided into two sexes, and that love means much more to women than to men. Also that satisfactions are divided into two kinds—those which have a time-value and are lasting, and those which have an intensity-value and are brief but thrilling.

Now love, in our sense, is a modern development of sexual relationship; the ancients apparently knew little or nothing of it. Anglo-Saxons have certainly conspired to be sentimental about love. If they sing they sing about it, and if they spin yarns they spin yarns about it. Assuredly it is a wondrous development; but whether it is a development which makes on the whole for happiness or for unhappiness, for satisfaction or for dissatisfaction, has not yet been decided. That it brings a little acute happiness is undeniable; that it brings a lot of unhappiness is equally undeniable. Few persons passionately in love are happy for long; the major part of their days is passed in torment. Protest against this as much as you please, it is a fact.

When passionate love cools into a steady, mild affection, and the affection is mutual, then satisfaction ensues, and such satisfaction is great. But quite as often passionate love cools into indifference and sometimes it freezes into detestation. Then it causes either boredom or misery. Speaking as impartially as a man can, and courageously braving the anathemas of Anglo-Saxondom, I would say that love ought not to be counted, in itself, among the major sources of satisfaction. Positively successful love, continuing to produce positive happiness throughout the years, is in my opinion

Admiration, love, adoration are the rewards of extraordinary feminine beauty.

at least as rare as very great wealth or surpassing genius. Not that I would cut out modern love from human existence and go back to the sex-ideas of the Greeks—even if I could! No! Love is very valuable; for most of us it is inevitable; but I would call it a disciplinary experience rather than a trustworthy source of satisfaction.

Work, as a source of satisfaction, is not quite so unreliable as love. Happy are those who find congenial work, for the very act of work gives a satisfaction at once profound and pure—safe from remorse or regret. But vast numbers of people, perhaps the majority, never find congenial work. They regard all work as a necessary evil, as an immediate nuisance, and as merely a means to an end. And generally the end is modest enough, for they are not even ambitious—except in day-dreams. They hate to begin the day's work, and they are relieved when the day's work is done. Nevertheless, taking the rough with the smooth, I would count work as directly or indirectly a major source of enduring satisfaction.

For the few, to work is satisfying. For everybody, *to have worked* is satisfying, and the more so if the labour has been carried through conscientiously and honestly. The sensation of fatigue after a good day's work is accompanied by a satisfaction than which this world can scarcely offer better. It may be a mild satisfaction, but it wears well. It has a moral quality which is aseptic, preserving it from any decay. To embark on a job, to do it, and then to say, "I have done it"—here indeed is a satisfying experience which, however often repeated, will not grow stale. The accomplishment may not have all the secondary results hoped for; it may end in ambition frustrated; but it cannot fail to have the primary result of moral satisfaction in finished endeavour.

The acquirement of knowledge has been for centuries advocated as a means of great satisfaction. But, though I favour and desire knowledge and am always searching after it so far as a natural indolence permits, I think that too much importance may be given to it. In the first place, the average person is so situated that he has neither the leisure nor the opportunity nor the will to get knowledge sufficient to produce in him a great satisfaction. And in the second place, men of learning seem too often to be unable to relate their knowledge to their lives. Nor do their faces appear to be illuminated by some secret ecstasy. They are often mighty grumblers before Heaven. They rarely, with all their learning, have learnt enough to keep themselves in health or to bring up their children in a manner fair to the children. They are apt to take to knowledge as the wicked take to vice. Their knowledge is neither more nor less useful than the miser's money in a safe. They lose the sense of relative values.

It is better for a man to maintain himself in good health than to load himself with learning. Indeed, I would rank good health very high in the major satisfactions of life. I would almost say: "Be healthy and you will be happy." The common phrase

Passionate love often cools into indifference.

"*enjoy* good health" is a just phrase. When one has good health one enjoys it all the time, and the healthy man needs little else for his satisfaction. Like many deep truths, this sounds cynical, but it is not.

As for children, children, considered as sources of satisfaction, have drawbacks.

Every baby is the most wondrous baby in the universe.

They may have poor constitutions; they may be naughty; they may be ungrateful, neglectful, cruel. They may turn out badly. They may even die too soon. They are indeed full of terrible risks. Yet as a source of satisfaction they cannot be beaten—speaking generally. They are a continual fund of interest and of pride; and they arouse in their parents all the finest unselfish emotions. They are exciting, day and night, when they are infants; and every baby is the most wondrous baby in the universe; they are exciting during the years of school; and they are exciting when they grow up. The feelings of a parent as he or she contemplates the spectacle of a young man or girl healthily reared, educated, and launched with a good prospect of success upon the world—these feelings are perhaps the most completely satisfying that a human being can have.

But not everybody can have this experience, or can look forward to it. And the drawback of any attempt to answer the question, "What are life's greatest satisfactions?" is that one can scarcely mention a single major satisfaction from which a considerable number of readers are not debarred, by either circumstances, nature, or age.

There is, however, one major satisfaction—and it may well be the greatest of all—which is equally open to all. I mean the exercise of benevolence. I do not necessarily mean what are called "good works," which, by the way, are often bad works, regrettable in their subtly sinister influence on the doer as well as on the receiver, and which in any case many people have neither the time nor the ability to perform.

Let those who can do good works. The best cure for worry, depression, melancholy brooding is to go deliberately forth and try to lift with one's sympathy the gloom of somebody else. And let both those who can and those who can't do good works make a practice of benevolent *thought*. Let all think kindly of others; never criticize them, never condemn, never judge; on the contrary, let all condone, excuse, justify, seek to comprehend, seek to put themselves in the place of others. The mental attitude has to be perseveringly cultivated. It cannot be adopted by a mere good resolution. (Some—exceedingly few—are born with it, and all I have to say of them is that they do not know their luck, for something within them is always mysteriously manufacturing happiness for them.) We must ask ourselves about a thousand times a day, "Who am I to sit in judgment?" We must learn to perceive the absurdity, the impudence, and the preposterousness of sitting in judgment. To err is human, to forgive ought to be. Here is the finest form of benevolence, and it will produce the finest form of satisfaction—a satisfaction which increases from year to year and only reaches its maximum when life ends.

THE MAJOR'S CHRISTMAS PUZZLES

by Henry E. Dudeney

LAST Christmas my friend Major Crackhamwen had one of his periodical attacks of gout. He always accepted his affliction with good humour, and was once heard to say: "Ah, well! *Chacun à son goût*," though his own tastes were, not unnaturally, inclined in other directions. He is a widower, with a daughter, "Kattie," whose future husband, Ronald Warnhorn, was on a visit. The Major's old friends, Dr. Basham, the local practitioner, and the Rev. Amos Parkins, the vicar, were with him this Christmas Eve, and the latter had brought on his son Hector, who was home from Cambridge. Most of the members of this little party were fond of a good puzzle, and it was practically understood that they would try their wits at unravelling some posers.

"Is there any real difference between a puzzle and a problem?" asked the Doctor. "I notice that simple puzzles on the chessboard are called 'problems,' while great mathematicians sometimes write of very profound questions as 'puzzles.'"

"I am inclined to think," said the Major, "that it would be more correct if we considered a 'problem' something to be solved more or less directly in the terms of the science to which it belongs, but a 'puzzle' a question dressed up in a more fanciful form, requiring a certain amount of cunning in the disentanglement of its conditions and verbiage. Let me give an example of what I mean.

JOHN AND MARY.

"JOHN is twice the age that Mary was when he was the age that she is, and when Mary is the age that John is, their combined ages will add to exactly sixty years. What are their present ages?

"Now, if you state that in simple mathematical terms you will have a 'problem' in very elementary algebra that a child can solve, but the 'puzzle' consists in so stating it. Many people find it very bewildering."

This puzzle was, of course, soon mastered.

THE DAMAGED ENGINE.

"THAT reminds me of a little tangle of my own experience," said the Parson. "I was going the other day by train from Anglechester to Clinkertown, and an hour after starting some accident happened to the engine—something went wrong with the propeller—I mean the sparking plug——"

"I think, dad," broke in Hector, "you said the engine-driver told you he blew off a cylinder head."

"Yes, my boy, that was it. Well, we had to continue the journey at three-fifths of the former speed, and it made us two hours late at Clinkertown, and the driver said that if only the accident had happened fifty miles farther on the train would have arrived forty minutes sooner. Now, my son here tells me that he has worked out from that statement just how far

it is from Anglechester to Clinkertown. It is a bit too much for me. Perhaps some of you will see what you can make of it."

This they found rather perplexing, and in the end they invited Hector to show them how he did it.

BURIED FRUITS.

"I HAVE a little puzzle here," said Kittie, "that was made by my friend, Dorothea Kay. I do not know whether it is too trivial for your notice, but perhaps it is good for great minds sometimes to unbend."

They smiled, for they were all, to a man, possessed of that modesty which is the charm of the true puzzle lover. So, at their urgent request, she produced the following :—

Ah! If I get my good ship home
I'll find a tempting rural spot,
Where mayhap pleasant flowers will bloom,
And there I'll shape a charming cot.

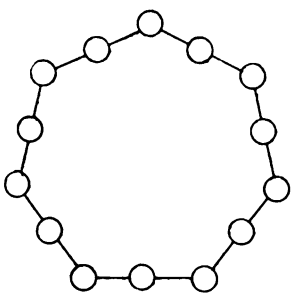
Where bees sip nectar in each flower,
And Philomel on hawthorn rests,
I'll shape a rustic, sun-kissed bower—
A bower meet for angel guests.

Then she who lives and loves with me,
Cheering our days of calm repose,
Sole monarch of the flowers will be—
For Myra is indeed a rose.

They were told that a different fruit (twelve in all) is buried in every line. Of course, it did not take them long, but they thought it a pretty and ingenious setting.

A HEPTAGON PUZZLE.

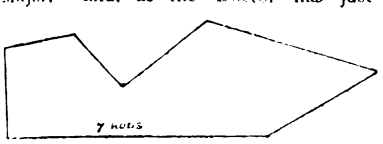
"I WAS this morning trying to solve this puzzle," said Ronald Warnham. "I confess I failed, but I was hoping to find some orderly method of doing it. Using the fourteen numbers, 1, 2, 3, up to 14, you have to place a different number in every circle so that the three numbers in every one of the seven sides add up 19."



It happened that the Doctor had in the past devoted some thought to an investigation of a similar puzzle in the form of a pentagon, so he knew exactly how to tackle it, and quickly wrote out the answer, showing them at the same time some interesting features.

A PROBLEM FOR SURVEYORS.

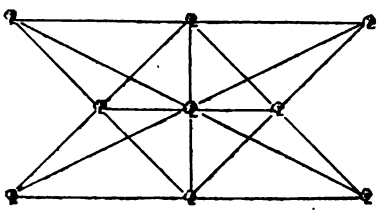
"THERE are tricks in every trade," said the Major, "and, as the Doctor has just reminded me, the science of numbers contains an infinite number of them. In nearly every vocation of life there are little wrinkles and short cuts that are most useful when known. For example, a few weeks ago I bought a little field adjoining my property, and here is the scale map (one inch to the rod) that was given to me. I asked my surveyor to tell me the area of the field, but he said it was impossible without some further measurements; the mere length of one side, 7 rods, was insufficient. What was his surprise when I showed him in about two minutes what was the area! Can any one of you tell me how it is to be done?"



Nobody had the slightest idea how to proceed, and I wonder how many surveyors who read these lines could do it. And yet, as the Major showed them, it is not at all difficult—if you know how.

A PLANTATION PUZZLE.

"YOU will all remember," said the Doctor, "the old puzzle, attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, of the man who had to plant nine trees so as to form ten rows, with three trees in every row. This is, of course, the way in which it is done." He handed them a sketch



that we here reproduce. "Now, if the man bought one extra tree and wished to have five rows with four trees in every row, what is the smallest number of trees that he need transplant, and how should he arrange the ten trees?"

When they had solved this, Kittie gave them another little word puzzle.

MISSING WORDS.

WHEN we were young, with .... we played,
And on the jam in .... would raid.
Our lessons though we'd .... with glee,
Upon the .... at games we'd be.
We'd measles, mumps—aye, all the batch;
The .... we now more often catch.

Of course each word that is missing contains the same letters.

BUYING FRUIT.

"HERE is a little puzzle for you, Kittie," said the Major. "A friend once told me that she had bought some plums at threepence apiece and the same number of pears at fourpence each, but afterwards discovered that if she had spent the same money equally on plums and pears, she would have received two more fruits than she did. Now, how many plums and pears did she buy?"

While Kittie was considering this little puzzle, and it was not many minutes before she found the answer, the Doctor took the chessboard and set up the men as for a game.

THE DOCTOR'S CHESS PUZZLE.

"HERE is a puzzle," he said, "that I was amusing myself with last night. Construct an imaginary game (no matter how absurd so long as the moves are legitimate) in which in the fewest possible moves White gets his queen on to a square on which she attacks no piece of the opponent and does not protect or receive any protection from any piece of his own."

"In other words," suggested the Parson, "the queen is not to be in line with any other piece on the board."

"That is near enough," the Doctor admitted, "though it might possibly happen that the queen was protected by a knight without herself being in line with it; yet that is not likely to occur. Now, I have got it down to as few as six moves. Perhaps one of you can do it in five."

They found several solutions in seven moves, but could not find the Doctor's six. Of course, by six moves, he meant six for both White and Black. It is an amusing little puzzle to find the most favourable square for the isolation of the queen and then clear the ground in so few as six moves.

A WORD SQUARE.

"I HAVE just remembered," said Hector, "a little word square that may be new to the company. Here it is:—

My *first*, a holy man was he,
Who sought to *sixth* his fellow man:
He saw a *fifth* perched in a tree
And on my *fourth* to view it ran.
He was not *third*, but clever reckoned,
Though dressed in rather curious *second*.

It had been noticed that during the time they were considering this trifle the Major had been hunting for something in a heap of papers. Suddenly he found what he wanted.

THE MAGISTERIAL BENCH.

"AH! here is the thing I wanted. It is a letter from an old friend of mine at Singapore. He asked me some time ago to give him my solution to a problem and I had forgotten his exact conditions. Now I shall have the thing correct.

"A bench of magistrates (he does not say where) consists of two Englishmen, two Scotsmen, two Welshmen, one Frenchman, one Italian, one Spaniard, and one American. The Englishmen will not sit beside one another, the Scotsmen will not sit beside one another, and the Welshmen also object to sitting together. Now, in how many different ways may the ten men sit in a straight line so that no two men of the same nationality shall ever be next to one another?"

"Surely it is a simple matter in conditional permutations?" said Ronald.

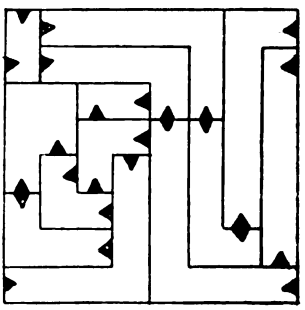
"Just what I was thinking," Hector remarked, and he wrote out a comparatively simple formula which he submitted would give the answer.

"Not quite so simple as you young men think," insisted the Doctor, and he had no difficulty in showing where Hector had gone wrong. "These are the pitfalls into which you can easily stumble in such a case."

"True, Basham," said the Major, "and yet it is not really difficult if you attack it in the best way. I will leave it to you all to consider at your leisure."

THE THIRTEEN DIAMONDS.

"I HAVE brought on," said the Parson, "a puzzle with which I have been somewhat intrigued—I think that is the fashionable word—during the last few days. Of course it is purely a game of patience, and can only be solved by trial. But it is very teasing. You are simply asked to put the thirteen pieces together so as to form a square with thirteen diamonds. You see, as the pieces are now put together the square is properly formed, but there are only four diamonds—the remaining halves do not combine."



"I should think," said Kittie, "that the diamonds condition would rather help than hinder one in finding a solution."

"It is difficult to say," the Parson replied. "I have not quite made up my mind on the point."

If the reader will get one of his juvenile friends to rule on cardboard a square 8 by 8, like a draughts board, mark in the half diamonds and then cut out the pieces, he will have a puzzle that will afford perennial entertainment for wet days and idle hours. You may solve it one day and find it quite sufficiently difficult to repeat a week later. This was the last puzzle forthcoming that evening.

(The solutions to the puzzles in the above article, together with some new "Perplexities," will appear in our next issue.)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST MONTH'S PERPLEXITIES.

725.—TRANSFERRING THE COUNTERS.

MAKE a pile of five counters (1 to 5) on B in 9 moves. Make a pile of four (6 to 9) on C in 7 moves. Make a pile of three (10 to 12) on D in 5 moves. Make a pile of two (13 and 14) on E in 3 moves. Place one (15) on F in 1 move. Replace 13 and 14 on F in 3. 10 to 12 on F in 5, 6 to 9 in 7, and 1 to 5 in 9 moves. Forty-nine moves in all.

726.—PROHIBITION AGAIN.

FILL 7-quart; fill 5-quart; empty 108 quarts from barrel; empty 5-quart into barrel; fill 5-quart from 7-quart; empty 5-quart into barrel; pour 2 quarts from 7-quart into 5-quart; fill 7-quart from barrel; fill up 5-quart from 7-quart; empty 5-quart into barrel; pour 4 quarts from 7-quart into 5-quart; fill 7-quart from barrel; fill up 5-quart from 7-quart; throw away contents of 5-quart; fill 5-quart from barrel; throw away 5 quarts from 5-quart; empty 1 quart from barrel into 5-quart. The feat is thus performed in 17 transactions—the fewest possible.

727.—A DRAUGHTS PROBLEM.

NUMBER the white squares 1 to 32 inclusive downwards from left to right. Then play 11 to 7, 4 to 8; 19 to 15, 12 to 16; 30 to 26, 22 to 31; 7 to 3, 31 to 24; 3 to 28, and White wins.

728.—THE TRAMPS AND THE BISCUITS.

WITH four men, the smallest number of biscuits must be 1,021 if an odd biscuit is to be given to the monkey at the final division, but if there is no odd biscuit for the monkey at the final division the smallest number is 765. In either case, these numbers increased by the addition of any multiple of 1,024 will work equally well.

How to make A MERRY XMAS.

Take one Xmas Pudding, pour over some Bird's Custard, piping hot. Take all your laughing boys and girls and give them spoons of size to match. Serve each with pudding, adding generous helpings of hot Custard sauce. Watch for five minutes the smiles of real enjoyment. Then clear away the empty plates!

Bird's Custard

unlike cream, never disagrees. It aids the digestion of the Pudding, Mince Pies and Fruit.

A Helpful Hint for Xmas. Well-whisk Bird's Custard when it is cold and set. It then goes like Summer Cream with Mince Pies, etc., and replaces clotted cream in Tartlets, Cream Horns, etc., etc.

C160c **Tins, 1/6; silvered boxes, 1/1 & 6½d.; small tricolour pkts. 1½d.**

The woman who uses Lux need never worry about her hands. Lux is as mild as the finest toilet soap: it leaves the hands white and soft

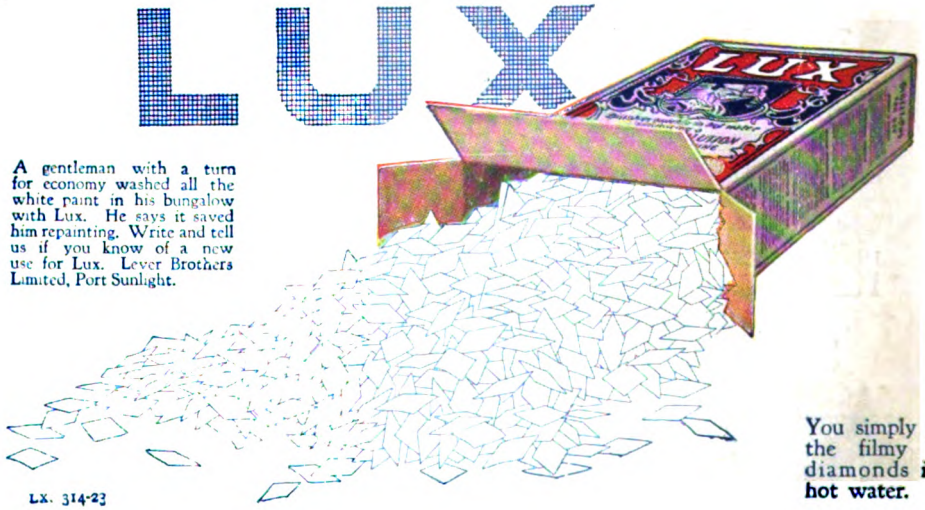
Lux for everything you wash yourself

There are many dainty things that you separate from the ordinary household washing because they are too precious to trust to other hands, too frail to risk in the family wash. Wash them with Lux. Lux will not harm anything that water alone will not harm.

Use Lux for everything you wash yourself. It is just as easy as washing your hands. The filmy Lux diamonds are made to melt instantly into a rich foam of almost magic cleansing power, which yet is gentle to the frailest fabric.

Be sure you get LUX—in the familiar carton. So-called substitutes, sold loose, are thick shreds of ordinary soap. Lux is unique: make sure you get Lux.

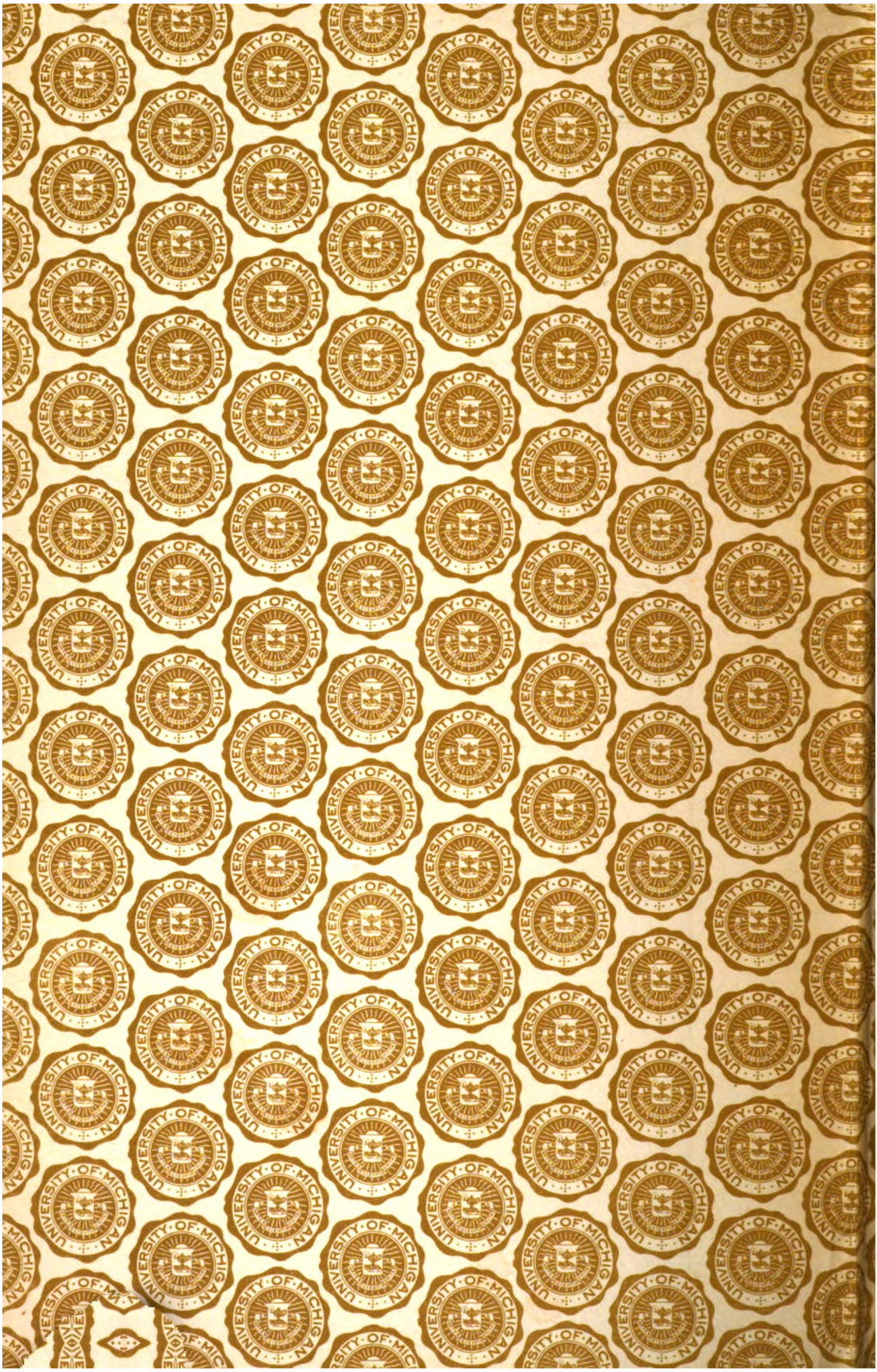
LUX



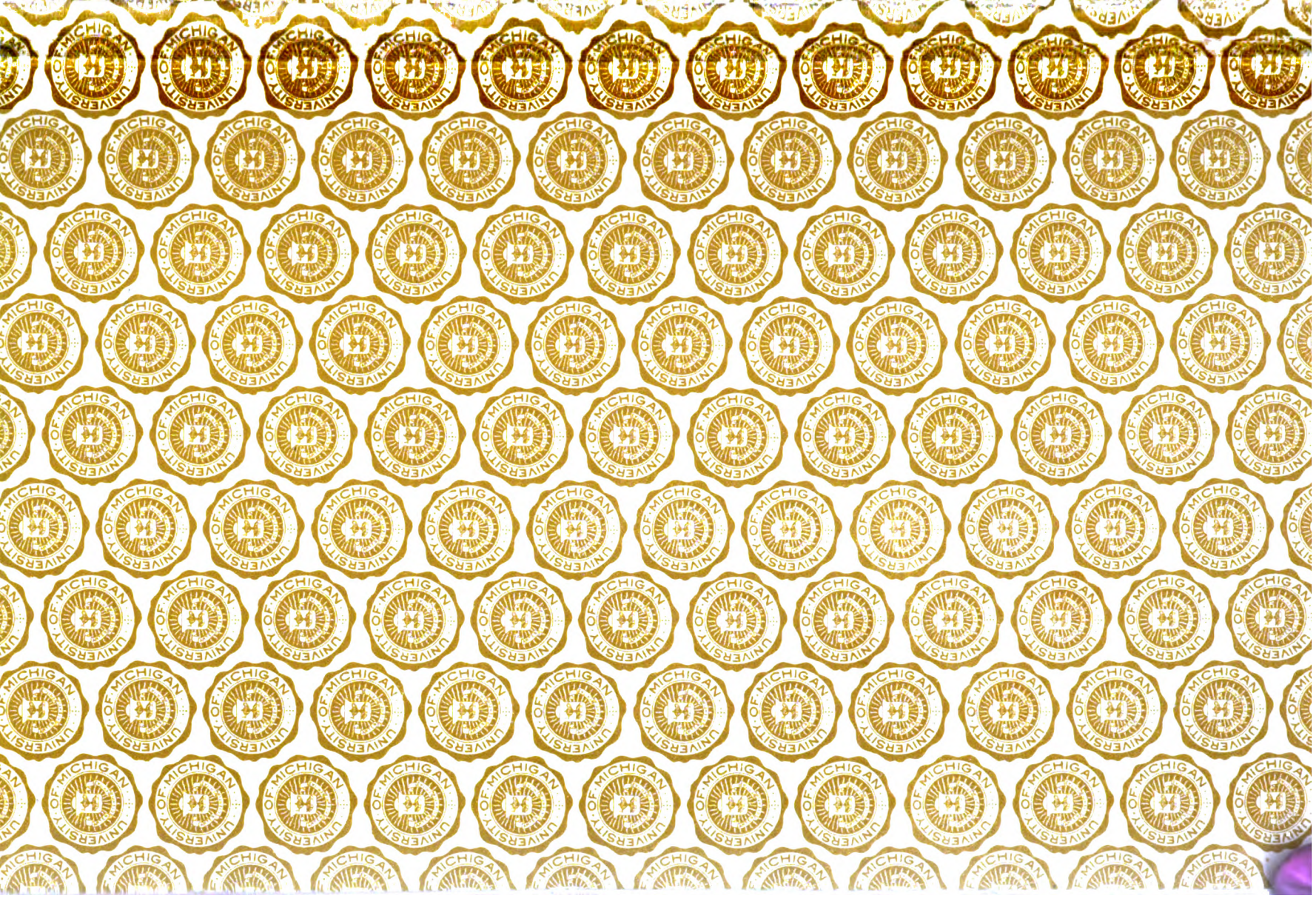
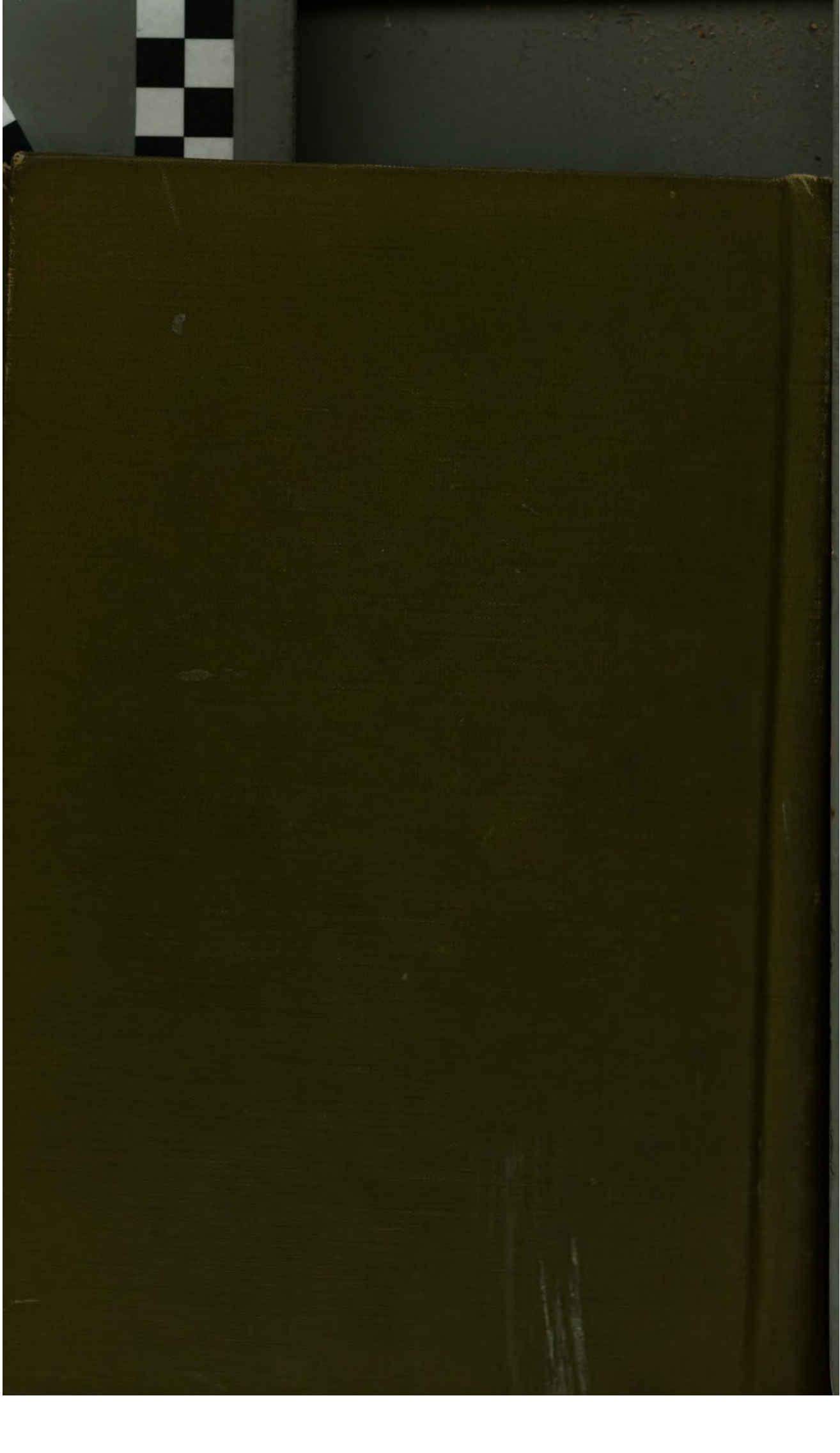
A gentleman with a turn for economy washed all the white paint in his bungalow with Lux. He says it saved him repainting. Write and tell us if you know of a new use for Lux. Lever Brothers Limited, Port Sunlight.

You simply toss the filmy Lux diamonds into **hot water.**

LX. 314-23


UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
3 9015 05541 0669
BOUND
FEB 6 1928
UNIV. OF MICH.
LIBRARY


UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
3 9015 05541 0669
SOUND
FEB 6 1928
UNIV. OF MICH.
LIBRARY